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ABSTRACT

This report presents findings from the 2000 Youth in Transition Survey 18-20-year-old cohort, which documents Canadian youth education and labor market experiences. By age 20, most youth had graduated from high school, and 70 percent were participating in postsecondary education. Dropout rates were higher for males than females. High school graduates were more likely to have lived in two-parent families, have highly educated parents, and have higher grades. School-related reasons dominated decisions to drop out. Graduates were more likely than dropouts to have had a paid job during their senior year. Just over half of the respondents who were out of high school attended postsecondary educational institutions. More women than men were postsecondary graduates or continuers. Respondents felt most confident about their reading skills and least confident about math and computer skills, with gender differences evident. Youth generally regarded their volunteer experiences positively. Labor market patterns reflected education status. About half of postsecondary education participants attended community colleges in their fist year, while one-third attended universities. About half of respondents reported barriers to going as far in school as desired (particularly financial barriers). Students relied on many funding sources. An appendix presents survey methodology. (SM)

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At a Crossroads

First Results for the 18 to 20-Year-old Cohort of the Youth in Transition Survey

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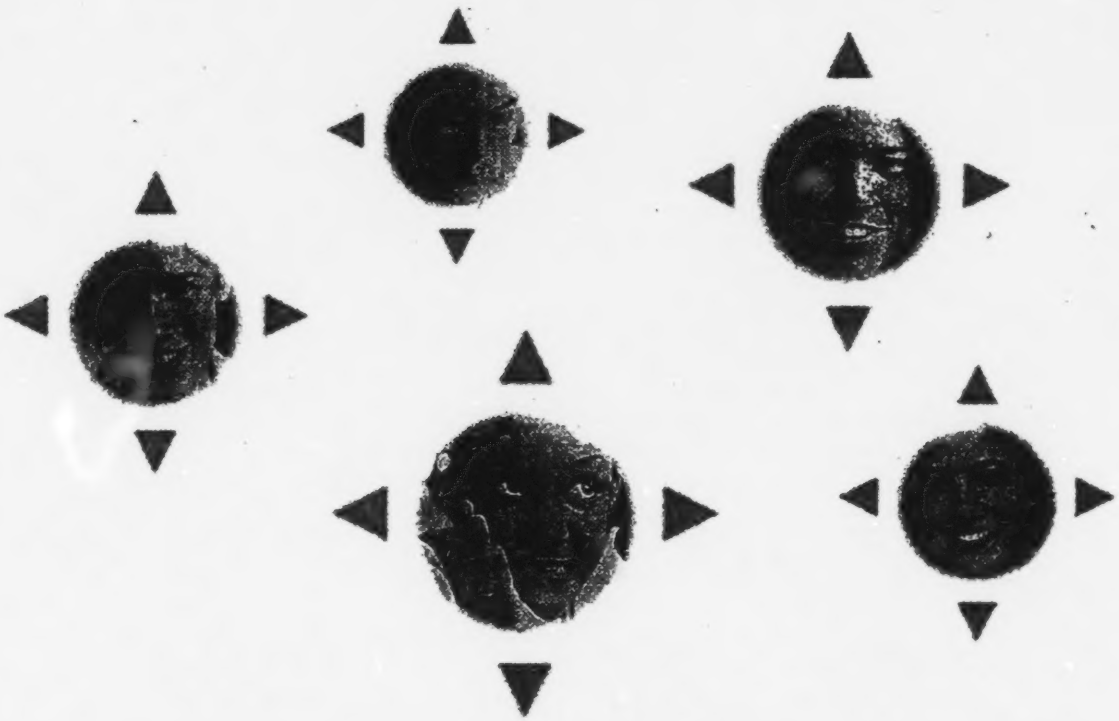

At a Crossroads

First Results for the 18 to 20-Year-old Cohort of the Youth in Transition Survey

January 2002

Jeffrey W. Bowlby, Human Resources Development Canada
Kathryn McMullen, Statistics Canada

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Human Resources Development Canada, Statistics Canada or of the federal government.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword 11
Acknowledgements 13
Highlights 15

Chapter 1 Introduction 19
1.1 New Opportunities and Challenges for Canada's Youth 19
1.2 Youth at a Crossroads 19
1.3 The Youth in Transition Survey 20
Objectives and Survey Content 20
Longitudinal Survey Design 21
1.4 Objectives and Organization of this Report 21

Chapter 2 Dropping Out of High School 23
2.1 National Dropout Rate 23
2.2 Provincial Dropout Rates 24
2.3 Has the Dropout Rate Changed in the Last Decade? 26
2.4 Re-examining Dropout Rates Due to "Second Chance" Education 27
2.5 Summary 27

Chapter 3 Comparing High School Graduates and Dropouts 29
3.1 Social Background 29
Family Structure 29
Parents' Education 30
Parents' Occupation 31
3.2 Academic Grades 33
The Impact of Repeating an Elementary Grade 34
3.3 School Engagement 35
3.4 Working During High School 37
3.5 Marital and Parental Status of Youth 39
3.6 Peer Influence and Individual Behaviours 40
3.7 Educational Aspirations 41
3.8 The Process of Dropping Out 41
3.9 Summary 43

Chapter 4 Pathways After High School 45
4.1 Characteristics of School Leavers and School Continuers 45
Participation in Post-secondary Education 45
Post-secondary Participation and Family Characteristics 47
4.2 After High School – Self-assessment of Skills 48
Skill Ratings Are Highest for Reading and Lowest for Math and Computer Skills 49
Ratings on All Skills Are Lowest for High School Dropouts 50
Gender Differences in Skill Ratings 50
4.3 Career Planning, Job-skills Courses, and Volunteering 51
Career Planning and Job-skills Courses 51
Volunteering 52
Volunteering and Job Skills 53
4.4 Labour Market Participation after High School 54
4.5 Post-secondary Participation: A Preliminary Picture 55
Post-secondary Participation by Type of Institution 55
Living Arrangements in First Year of PSE 56
Sources of Funding for PSE 56
Attitudes, Sense of Belonging 57
4.6 Barriers to Post-secondary Education 59
Experience with Government-sponsored Student Loans 60
4.7 Summary 60
Chapter 4 Appendix Tables 62

Chapter 5 Conclusion 65
Dropping Out of High School 66
Pathways After High School 66

Appendix A YITS 18-20-Year-old Survey Methodology 69

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 High School Education Status of 18-20-Year-olds, December 1999 23

Table 2.2 A Comparison of High School Dropout Rates Among 20-Year-olds, 1991 and 1999 (Percent) 26

Table 2.3 Accounting for Dropouts Who Pursue Second Chance Education 28

Table 3.1 Grade Averages in High School (Percent) 33

Table 3.2 High School Engagement Indicators (Percent) 35

Table 3.3 Paid Weekly Work Hours During Last Year of High School (Percent) 37

Table 3.4 Peer Influence and Behaviours Among Graduates & Dropouts 40

Table 4.1 After High School – Education Status of 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School as of December 1999, by Gender 46

Table 4.2 After High School – Education Status of 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School as of December 1999, by Province (Percent) 46

Table 4.3 Self-assessment of Skills of 18-20-Year-olds No longer in High School (Percent) 49

Table 4.4 Self-assessment of Skills of 18-20-Year-olds No Longer in High School, by Gender (Percent) 50

Table 4.5 Volunteering – Did It Help Develop Skills and Help You Get a Job? (Percent) 53

Table 4.6 After High School — Employment Status by Gender, December 1999 (Percent) 54

Table 4.7 Sources of Funding for Post-secondary Education (Percent) 57

Table 4.8 Attitudes, Sense of Belonging, First Year of Post-secondary Education (Percent) 58

Table 4.9 Barriers to Post-secondary Education (Percent) 60

Chapter 4 Appendix Table 4.1: After High School – Education Status of 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School as of December 1999, by Gender and Province (Percent) 62

Chapter 4 Appendix Table 4.2: Self-assessment of Skills, 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School, by Province (Percent) 63

Chapter 4 Appendix Table 4.3:
Attitudes, Sense of Belonging, First Year of Post-secondary Education, by Gender (Percent) 64

Appendix A

Table A.1: Response Rates by Province of LFS Household 71

Table A.2: Response Rates by Sex and Age as of December 1999 72

Table A.3: Response Rates by Date of LFS Household Data 72

Table A.4: High School Dropout Rates Among 20-Year-olds (Percent) 73

Table A.5: Highest Educational Attainment of Parents of High School Dropouts (Percent) 73

Table A.6: Self-assessment of High School Dropouts' Problem-solving Skills (Percent) 74

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Pathways of Youth 18 to 20 Years old	20
Figure 2.1	High School Education Status of 20-Year-olds, by Gender	24
Figure 2.2	Provincial High School Dropout Rates at Age 20	25
Figure 2.3	Provincial High School Dropout Rates at Age 20, by Gender	25
Figure 2.4	High School Dropout Rates Among 20-24-Year-olds, 1991-1999	27
Figure 3.1	Family Structure During High School	30
Figure 3.2	Two-Parent Family Structure During High School	30
Figure 3.3	Highest Educational Attainment of Parents or Guardians	31
Figure 3.4	Occupational Category of Mothers of Graduates & Dropouts	32
Figure 3.5	Occupational Category of Fathers of Graduates & Dropouts	32
Figure 3.6	Incidence of Elementary Grade Repetition	34
Figure 3.7	Participation in High School and Non-School Extra-Curricular Activities	36
Figure 3.8	Hours Worked for Pay Each Week During Last Year of High School	37
Figure 3.9	Dropout Rates by Hours Worked for Pay Each Week During Last Year of High School	38
Figure 3.10	Percentage of Graduates & Dropouts Married or Living with a Partner, in 2000	39
Figure 3.11	Percentage of Graduates & Dropouts with Dependent Children, in 2000	39
Figure 3.12	Educational Aspirations of Graduates & Dropouts	41
Figure 3.13	Main Reason for Dropping Out of High School	42
Figure 4.1	Family Structure and Education Status, 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School	47
Figure 4.2	Youth Education Status December 1999 and Parental Educational Attainment	48
Figure 4.3	Percentage of 18-20-Year-olds Who Had Taken Career Planning or Job-skills Courses in High School	51
Figure 4.4	Participation in Unpaid Volunteer Activities in 1999, by Gender	52
Figure 4.5	Percentage of Youth Reporting Any Volunteering in 1999, by Province Where Was Last in High School	53
Figure 4.6	Employment Status of Youth Who Were No Longer in High School in December 1999	54
Figure 4.7	Type of Institution Attended, First Year of Post-secondary Education	56
Figure 5	Summary of Pathways of 18-20-Year-olds, December 1999	65

FOREWORD

Human capital – having a highly-educated labour force that possesses the knowledge and skills needed for innovation and productivity growth and that is flexible and adaptable in the face of on-going change – is the cornerstone of success for societies living and working in today's knowledge-based, globalized environment. Given this context, Canada's long-term economic and social potential depends in good measure on how successfully youth navigate school and work transitions. The Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) was designed to collect a broad range of information on the education and labour market experiences of youth. The YITS is a longitudinal survey developed through a partnership between Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics Canada. This report presents findings from the first cycle of the YITS 18-20-year-old cohort. Between January and March 2000, more than 22,000 Canadian youth participated in the survey.

In several respects, youth aged 18-20 are at a crossroads. For many, the transition from school to work is a complex, non-linear process — some youth attend school and work at the same time, others return to school after starting out in the workforce, and others move between a number of part-time or temporary jobs before entering into a more stable employment relationship. With such variable pathways, a survey that tracks the progress of youth over time is a key instrument for identifying the factors that can assist youth in the successful pursuit of their education and employment goals.

On behalf of Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics Canada, we thank the many thousands of young people who gave so generously of their time to provide a rich body of information essential for research and policy analysis. The insights this information provides will help to inform the choices made by a wide range of stakeholders, including youth, parents, educators and policy makers.

Allen Zeesman
Director General
Applied Research Branch
Human Resources Development Canada

T. Scott Murray
Director General
Institutions and Social Statistics Branch
Statistics Canada

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Jeffrey Bowlby, Human Resources Development Canada
Kathryn McMullen, Statistics Canada

At a Crossroads

First Results for the 18 to 20-Year-old Cohort of the Youth in Transition Survey

This report provides a descriptive overview of the first results from the 2000 Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) for 18-20-year-olds in Canada. These early results draw a picture of where youth stand in terms of both their educational participation and attainment and their labour market participation as of December 1999. Youth at this age are in transition – some are in the final stages of completing high school, others are continuing their education at the post-secondary level, while still others have left the school system altogether. Most leave after graduation, while some have left school before completing their program, or using the more common term employed in this report, have "dropped out" of school. Youth in this age group also exhibit different levels of attachment to the labour market, with some combining work and school and others being full labour market participants.

Given variable pathways, a survey such as the YITS that tracks the progress of youth is a key instrument for identifying the factors that can assist youth in the successful pursuit of their education and employment goals. The second cycle of the YITS, scheduled for early 2002, will collect new information from this same group of youth, tracking their educational and labour market activities over time.

Highlights

- By the age of 20, the vast majority of Canadian youth (85%, as of December 1999) had graduated from high school.
- About 70% of high school graduates between the ages of 18 and 20 had gone on to post-secondary education.

Dropping out of high school

- There was a sharp decrease in the high school dropout rate through the 1990s. As of December 1999, the high school dropout rate for 20-year-olds stood at 12%. This compares to a dropout rate of 18% reported by the 1991 School Leavers Survey.
- The Atlantic Provinces in particular showed large average decreases in their dropout rates, which fell from among the highest rates in 1991 to among the lowest by the end of 1999.
- High school dropout rates remained high in most jurisdictions for young males compared to young females.

- Some high school dropouts engage in "second chance" educational opportunities – such as completing high school at a later age, or enrolling in post-secondary programs. About 8.5% of high school dropouts had participated in post-secondary programs by December 1999.

Characteristics of high school dropouts

- High school graduates were more likely than dropouts to have lived in two-parent families during high school, while dropouts were more likely than graduates to have come from single-parent families.
- Graduates were more likely to have had parents who had completed a post-secondary diploma or university degree; the proportion of dropouts who had parents who had not completed high school was three times that of graduates.
- Parents of graduates were more likely to work in management, science or other professional occupations than was the case for dropouts.
- Dropouts obtained lower grades, on average, than graduates. Male dropouts in particular were more likely to have achieved low grades and to have repeated a grade in elementary school.
- But not all dropouts obtained low grades. In fact, almost half obtained a B average. Clearly, academic difficulties are not the only reason for dropping out.
- Compared to graduates, dropouts were less engaged in school, both academically and socially. They were less likely to have had close friends who pursued further education past high school and were more likely to have engaged in such behaviors as skipping class, drinking alcohol regularly, and using drugs frequently.
- While school-related reasons dominated the decision to drop out, other factors also played a role – for some young men wanting to work was an important factor, as was pregnancy and child rearing in the case of some young women.
- Three-quarters of those who had dropped out later expressed regret over their decision.

Working during high school

- High school graduates were more likely than dropouts to have had a paid job during their last year of high school.
- Among those who worked for pay, dropout rates were lowest for those who worked a moderate number of hours weekly and highest for those who worked the equivalent of full-time hours.
- Male dropouts who were working while in high school were most likely to work long hours.

Pathways after high school

- As of December 1999, just over half of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school were attending a post-secondary educational institution; 4.3% had already graduated from a post-secondary institution; and 5.7% had left a post-secondary program before completing it.
- Slightly over one-quarter of youth who were no longer in high school had graduated but had not gone on to post-secondary education (PSE); about 12% were high school dropouts with no PSE.

- Higher percentages of young women were either post-secondary continuers or post-secondary graduates compared to young men.
- PSE participants were least likely to have come from single-parent families and were more likely to report having lived with both parents while in high school.
- PSE continuers tended to come from families where one or both parents had a university degree.

Skills

- Youth generally felt most confident about their reading skills and least confident about their math and computer skills. There were clear gender differences: girls tended to rate their reading and writing skills more positively than did boys; boys, in contrast, rated their problem-solving, math and computer skills more highly than did girls.
- Larger proportions of high school dropouts consistently assessed their skill levels as being fair/poor; the largest percentages of youth who assessed their skills as being very good/excellent were those enroled at the post-secondary level.
- High school dropouts were less likely than other young people to have been exposed to career and job-skills courses while in high school.

Volunteering

- Youth generally regarded their volunteer experience positively – over half of those who had volunteered reported that they had learned new skills they could apply to a job.

Labour market participation

- Labour market participation patterns reflected education status. Rates of full-time employment were highest for 18-20-year-olds who had completed a post-secondary program. Though employed, many of the jobs held by high school graduates with no PSE were part-time. The jobless rate (which includes both those who were unemployed and those not in the labour force) was highest for high school dropouts with no PSE.
- Gender differences in labour market participation are apparent. Generally, higher percentages of males had full-time jobs; part-time work was more common for females, especially among high school graduates with no PSE.

Experiences during first year of post-secondary education

- Close to half of PSE participants attended a community college or CEGEP in their first year of PSE; about one-third attended university; and the balance attended a range of other non-university post-secondary institutions such as technical, trade or vocational schools, university colleges or private business or training schools.
- Just over 40% of university students lived in residence in their first post-secondary year; 43% lived with their parents. The vast majority of students at other types of post-secondary institutions lived with their parents during their first year of PSE.
- PSE participants generally had positive attitudes and relationships during their first post-secondary year. But PSE leavers tended to be much less positive than continuers in terms of their 'fit' academically.

Access to post-secondary education

- Just under half of 18-20-year-olds reported facing barriers to going as far in school as they would like. About two-thirds of those reporting barriers cited financial barriers.
- Additional barriers reported by high school continuers and dropouts were: not being able to get into the PSE program they wanted or marks that were too low; not enough interest or motivation; and in the case of high school dropouts, wanting to work and needing to care for their own children.
- Students relied on a wide variety of funding sources for PSE. The most common source was earnings from employment. Compared to PSE graduates and PSE leavers (individuals who left PSE before graduating), higher percentages of PSE continuers also received money from their parents or partner, from scholarships, awards or prizes, from personal savings and from government-sponsored student loans.
- The percentages who had ever applied for a government-sponsored student loan were highest for PSE participants. Relatively few high school graduates with no PSE, high school continuers or high school dropouts with no PSE had ever made such an application.
- Of those who had applied for a government-sponsored student loan, close to 20% of PSE continuers reported that they had been rejected at least once; this fell to 16% of PSE leavers and 13.4% of PSE graduates.

Today's knowledge-based society presents youth with both opportunities and challenges as they make the transition to the labour market and full adulthood. The challenge for youth is to ensure that the education and labour market choices they make now will allow them to participate fully in the economy and the society of the 21st century. That means having the education and skills that are needed and having the ability and flexibility to be able to learn new skills as time goes on.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 New Opportunities and Challenges for Canada's Youth

Global change and the information and communications revolution present both opportunities and challenges to young people who are learning and working in the first few years of the new millenium. Young people who have the needed skills and knowledge will be better equipped to succeed as global trade expands and as economic opportunities open. As baby-boomers reach retirement age, the demand for new, skilled labour market participants will grow. In addition to the expanded opportunities that become available for youth themselves, Canada's competitiveness is improved by having young, highly-skilled additions to its labour pool.

Global economic fluctuations typically have a large impact on youth employment. Business leaders and social analysts believe that to succeed, Canada's young people will need to be adaptable and innovative, and to have sophisticated communication and technological skills.

Building the requisite human capital, or skills and knowledge, begins with a strong educational foundation. The completion of high school is widely recognized in Canada and in other countries as the minimum education requirement. However, the labour market demand for skills and knowledge suggests that post-secondary education is fast becoming the new educational standard. Certainly, those youth who fail to complete high school will have particular problems integrating into the new economy and society.

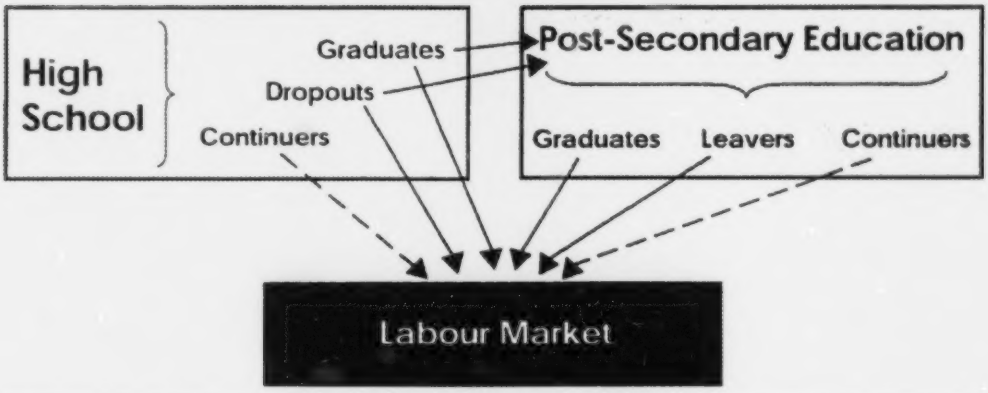
1.2 Youth at a Crossroads

This report examines youth 18 to 20 years of age at the start of their trajectories into the post-secondary education system and/or the labour market. "Youth" is a developmental stage between childhood and adulthood that is focused on human capital acquisition – one of new roles and increasing independence and self-reliance. Individuals at this age are at an important crossroads, where their decisions have long-term consequences for their personal and working lives. Up to the beginning of high school, the majority of children have broadly similar pathways. Later, due to the varying options available throughout the teen years, the pathways diverge more widely.

For many youth today, the transition from secondary school to full-time employment is complex and circuitous. The key pathways that youth follow at this age are presented in Figure 1. Many 18-20-year-olds are attending post-secondary institutions, some are working exclusively, while others simultaneously combine school and work. A few at this age are still

FIGURE 1

Pathways of Youth 18 to 20 Years Old



completing high school. Of special concern are those youth who have dropped out of high school and who do not yet possess the skills and knowledge to effectively compete in the labour market. Public policy can play a role in helping to ensure that youth at this age do not unwittingly limit future options and that, if this occurs, they are afforded opportunities to follow alternative pathways.

1.3 The Youth in Transition Survey

In order to better understand the experiential trajectories of youth in the context of a social and economic environment that is itself changing, Human Resources Development Canada launched the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS) with Statistics Canada in 2000. As a new, Canadian longitudinal survey, the YITS collects information on major transitions in the lives of youth, particularly between education, training and work. An overview of the survey methodology, including sample design, response rates and data quality issues, is presented in Appendix 1.[1]

Development of the YITS began in 1996. Consultations were held with key stakeholders across Canada, including federal government departments, provincial government offices of education and labour, practitioners working directly with youth, academic researchers, employers, business and education associations, youth and parents.[2]

Objectives and Survey Content

The broad objectives of the Youth in Transition Survey are as follows:

1. To examine key transitions in the lives of youth (moving from high school to post-secondary education, and the initial transition from schooling to the labour market);
2. To better understand educational and labour market pathways and the factors influencing them;
3. To identify the educational and occupational pathways that provide a smoother transition to the labour market;
4. To examine the incidence, influencing factors, effects of leaving school, and characteristics of students leaving school before graduating;
5. To understand the impact of school effects on educational and occupational outcomes;

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6. To examine the contribution of work experience programs, part-time jobs, and volunteer activities to skill development and transitions to the labour market;
7. To study the attitudes, behaviours, and skills of young people entering the labour market;
8. To gain a better understanding of the determinants of post-secondary entry and post-secondary retention, including education financing;
9. To better understand the role of education and labour market aspirations and expectations for investment in further education and career choice; and
10. To explore the educational and occupational pathways of various sub-groups, particularly "youth at risk."

The Youth in Transition Survey includes two age groups of youth – younger teenagers, who began their participation at 15 years of age, and an older cohort who started at ages 18 to 20.[3] This report focuses exclusively on the experiences of the older YITS cohort. A key benefit of including the older age cohort in the YITS is that it provides more immediate policy-relevant information on education, training and employment, tracking preparation for careers and initial career outcomes.

The YITS 18-20 provides a range of information on the education and employment experiences of youth including secondary and post-secondary participation and comprehensive employment histories. Data were collected on school engagement, skills, training, volunteering, extra-curricular activities, and educational and occupational aspirations. Financial information was also collected, such as information on income and post-secondary financing. Reflecting the need to collect data on sub-populations of youth, the survey includes questions on family socio-economic characteristics, information about parents, social and cultural capital, ethnicity, and language spoken in the home. YITS also collected information on behaviours and peer influence. A fuller discussion on the content of the YITS is included in a *Project Overview* document.[4]

This report provides an overview of the major findings from the first implementation of the YITS that took place between January and March 2000. More than 22,000 18-20-year-olds from the ten provinces participated in the survey.[5]

Longitudinal Survey Design

A key benefit of the YITS is that it is longitudinal. Current plans are to follow up with survey participants every two years for a period of several years.

Longitudinal survey designs have many advantages. For example, they are better than cross-sectional surveys at documenting experiential changes and examining the influence of prior experiences and states on current status and outcomes. Since respondents are interviewed frequently and are required to recall only recent events, data quality is improved.

The information that will be obtained about these youth in future YITS survey cycles will be used to examine how the decisions they make, and their education and work experiences at ages 18 to 20 affect them in the future.

1.4 Objectives and Organization of this Report

This report has two main objectives. First, it presents information on the issue of dropping out of high school in Canada, and second, it describes the post-high school education and work experiences of 18-20-year-olds.

To better estimate the preparedness of our youth for the labour market, the YITS provides accurate information on the number and characteristics of youth who are failing to meet

today's minimum standard of educational attainment. Estimates of Canada's high school dropout rate and the dropout rates for all provinces are presented in Chapter 2. Also presented is a comparison between the YITS dropout rates with those from the School Leavers Survey, which specifically focused on high school dropouts in 1991.

Chapter 3 provides more detailed comparisons of the characteristics of high school dropouts and graduates. Referring back to Figure 1, the focus of Chapters 2 and 3 is on the high school block. Data are presented on family and parental background, school grades and attitudes toward school, involvement with part-time jobs during high school, youths' parental and marital status, behaviours, peer influences, and educational aspirations. Formulating effective policies to combat dropping out of high school requires having a fuller understanding of the personal and social influences that lead some young people to leave school without graduating.

Again, referring to Figure 1, Chapter 4 examines the flows between high school and the post-secondary education and labour market blocks. More specifically, participation in all forms of post-secondary education is outlined, as well as findings on the characteristics of youth who have dropped out of post-secondary studies before completing their programs. In terms of employment, the experiences of youth who enter the labour market directly from high school are outlined. To gauge their readiness, self-assessments of skills are compared for youth who pursue post-secondary education and for those who enter the labour market directly. Results are also provided on the extent of high school participation in career planning courses and in job-skills courses, such as work experience programs, apprenticeships, and trade and vocational programs.

This report presents a descriptive overview – a snapshot of youths' education and employment experiences that will serve as a baseline for examining the changes that will be documented by future YITS cycles. The insights provided by analysis of the YITS data will contribute to an improved understanding of the challenges faced by today's youth and of the ways in which they can be assisted in making the most of the opportunities available to them.

Notes

1 Indicators of data quality are shown throughout this report. Estimated population characteristics with a coefficient of variation (CV) of 16.5% or less are considered to be of good quality and for these, no special notation has been applied. Estimates with CVs in the range of 16.6% to 33.3%, indicating a higher level of measurement error, are marked with a single asterisk (*). Two asterisks (**) identify estimates for which the CV exceeds 33.3%. Typically, higher levels of measurement error are associated with the analysis of rare characteristics in a population subgroup or for any characteristic within small subgroups.

2 Additional information on the development of the Youth in Transition Survey, including information on survey content, is available in *Youth in Transition Survey: Project Overview*. (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, Statistics Canada, 2000).

3 The younger teenagers also participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's international study designed to assess the literacy skills of youth in reading, mathematics and science. YITS and PISA findings for the younger cohort are presented in the report: *Measuring Up: the performance of Canada's youth in reading, mathematics and science: OECD PISA study, first results for Canadians aged 15*. (Ottawa: HRDC, Statistics Canada and CMEC, 2001).

4 Op. cit.

5 Data were not collected in the three territories or on Indian Reserves.

Chapter 2

DROPPING OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL

The skills and knowledge acquired through secondary education is valuable human capital – the foundation for workplace experiences, for additional learning and life skills. Perhaps one of the most important consequences of obtaining a high school diploma is that it affords youth the opportunity to further their education at the post-secondary level. Without a high school diploma, there is greater likelihood that youth will encounter many challenges in the labour market and in their adult roles in society.

In this report, high school dropouts are those who were not enrolled in high school and had not completed the requirements for a high school diploma by December of 1999. The high school dropout rate is the proportion of youth in a specified age group who have not completed their secondary education, and are not working towards its completion.

2.1 National Dropout Rate

YITS results show that the high school dropout rate among 20-year-old youth was 12% as of December 1999 – Table 2.1. The majority of youth at this age had completed high school (84.6%). The dropout rate was calculated for Canadian youth at 20 years of age because some were still continuing their education after the typical age of graduation.[1] This strategy better accounts for the "second chance" system in Canadian jurisdictions, whereby some youth who drop out return to complete their studies at a later age.

TABLE 2.1

High School Education Status of 18-20-Year-olds, December 1999

	Age							
	18		19		20		All Youth	
	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*	%	*N*
High School Graduates	62.3	250,914	80.4	326,836	84.6	340,952	75.8	920,386
High School Continuers	27.3	110,029	7.8	31,797	3.3	13,470	12.8	155,420
High School Dropouts	10.3	41,569	11.8	47,816	12.0	48,441	11.4	137,826

The national high school dropout rate among 20-year-olds was 12% in December 1999.

When examined by age, graduation rates increased from 18 to 20 years, and dropout rates increased from approximately 10% to 12%. The percentage of high school continuers decreased from about one-quarter of 18-year-olds to 3.3% of 20-year-olds.

The high school dropout rate among 20-year-old young men was much higher than for young women (14.7% compared to 9.2%) – Figure 2.1. Thus, about 15% of Canadian men by the age of 20 are failing to meet what many consider to be the minimum education standard today. Some of the possible reasons for the difference in male and female dropout rates will be explored in Chapter 3.

High school dropout rates were much higher for young men (14.7%) than for young women (9.2%).

2.2 Provincial Dropout Rates

Provincial high school dropout rates for 20-year-olds reveal a varied picture. Compared to other provinces, dropout rates were relatively low in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Ontario, and relatively high in Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Manitoba – Figure 2.2. Dropout rates in Alberta, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia were within range of the national average. Gaps in the dropout rates between males and females were reasonably large in many provinces – Figure 2.3.

FIGURE 2.1

High School Education Status of 20-Year-olds, by Gender

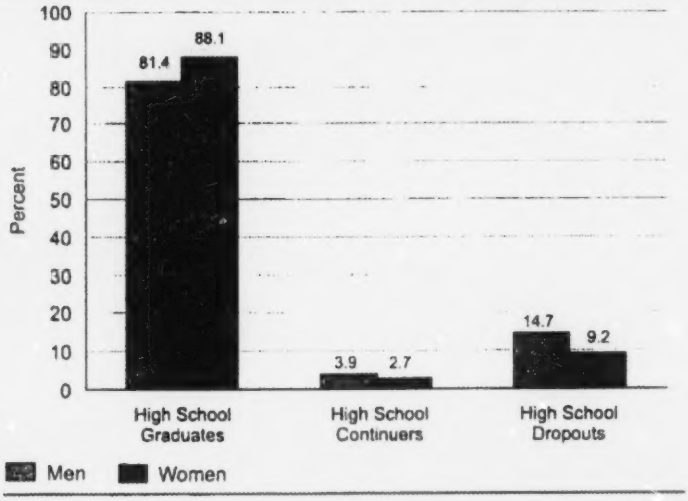

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FIGURE 2.2

Provincial High School Dropout Rates at Age 20

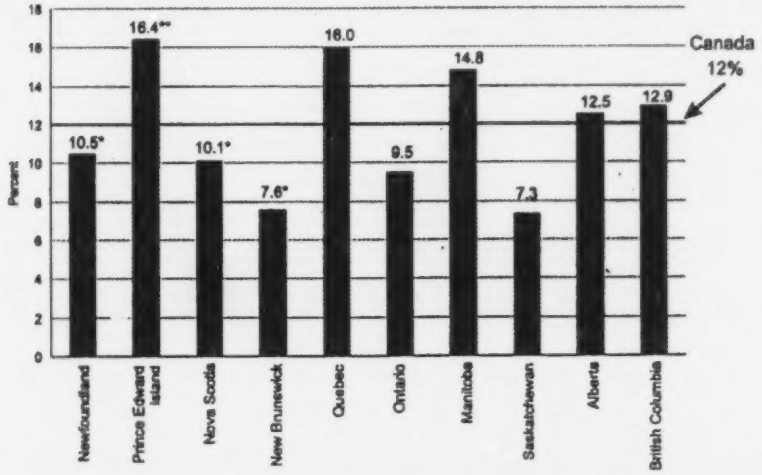
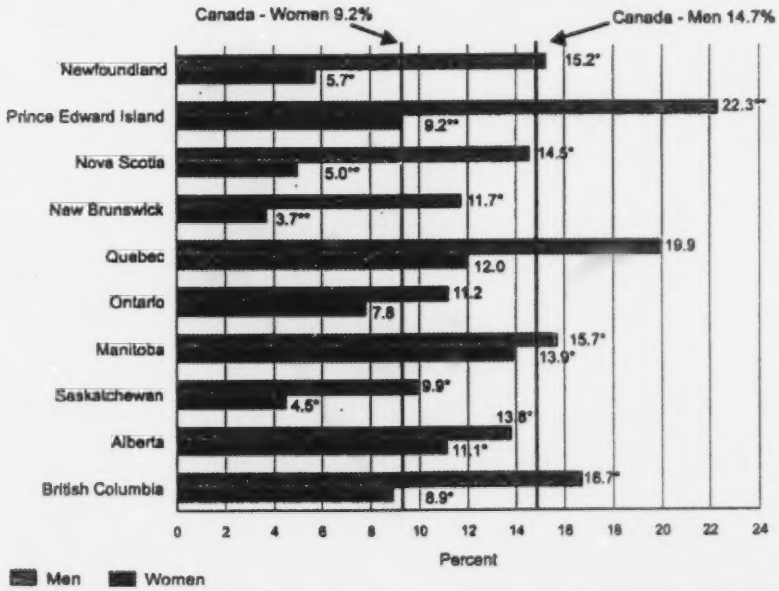


FIGURE 2.3

Provincial High School Dropout Rates at Age 20, by Gender



2.3 Has the Dropout Rate Changed in the Last Decade?

A benefit of the design and content of the Youth in Transition Survey is that it allows for some comparisons to be made with the 1991 School Leavers Survey.[2] As shown in Table 2.2, the high school dropout rate for 20-year-old youth stood at 18% in 1991, compared to 12% of 20-year-olds in 1999.

Findings from the two surveys reveal that the dropout rate in every province declined from the early to the late 1990s, and for most provinces the decline was substantial. The largest reductions took place in New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia. The Atlantic provinces experienced the largest average decline. While they had among the highest dropout rates in 1991, they displayed among the lowest rates (with the exception of P.E.I.) in 1999. Excluding Saskatchewan which experienced a larger decline, the smallest reductions over time occurred in the Western provinces, though, as noted earlier, the dropout rate in Alberta and British Columbia remained close to the national average.

TABLE 2.2

A Comparison of High School Dropout Rates Among 20-Year-olds, 1991 and 1999 (Percent)

	School Leavers Survey 1991			Youth in Transition Survey 1999		
	Total	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*
Canada	***18***	***22***	***14***	***12.0***	***14.7***	***9.2***
Newfoundland	24	29	19	10.5*	15.2*	5.7*
Prince Edward Island	25	33	17	16.4**	22.3**	9.2**
Nova Scotia	22	29	13*	10.1*	14.5*	5.0**
New Brunswick	20	23	16*	7.6*	11.7*	3.7**
Quebec	22	26	18*	16.0	19.9	12.0
Ontario	17	22	10*	9.5	11.2	7.8
Manitoba	19	20	18	14.8	15.7*	13.9*
Saskatchewan	16	16*	16*	7.3	9.9*	4.5*
Alberta	14	16*	12*	12.5	13.8*	11.1*
British Columbia	16	17*	14*	12.9	16.7*	8.9*

The high school dropout rate among 20-year-olds declined by one-third in the 1990s – falling from 18% in 1991 to 12% in 1999.

The decline in dropout rates between 1991 and 1999 was greater for men than women. Thus, although dropout rates remained higher for men by 1999, some gains were made over the past decade with respect to the number of Canadian men dropping out of high school.

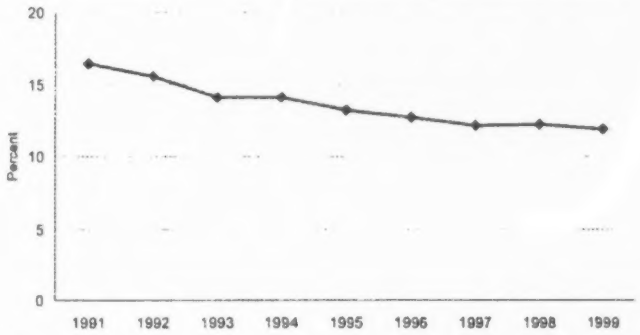
The findings on dropout rates from the YITS and the School Leavers Survey are in line with other nationally representative data on high school dropout rates among the youth

population. Data from the Labour Force Survey on a slightly older group of youth, 20 to 24 years of age, show that the high school dropout rate decreased from 16.4% in 1991 to 11.9% in 1999[3] - Figure 2.4.

High school dropout rates among 20-year-olds declined in all provinces in the 1990s.

FIGURE 2.4

High School Dropout Rates Among 20-24-Year-olds, 1991-1999



Source: Labour Force Survey

2.4 Re-examining Dropout Rates Due to "Second-Chance" Education

Analysis reveals that as of December 1999, 8.9% of 20-year-old high school dropouts were enrolled in or had completed some type of post-secondary education, including CEGEP, college, trade, vocational programs, or other courses above the high school level.

Dropouts and the "Second Chance" System

Of those dropping out of high school before graduating, some will return to complete their secondary studies at a later time. Others may enrol in programs or courses outside of secondary school, including programs at the post-secondary level. These constitute "second chance" educational opportunities for high school dropouts. It is important to account for this additional education because new skills, knowledge and credentials obtained by dropouts would have a positive impact on their human capital development and employment opportunities. Many of these youth would be less at risk of being excluded from the labour market, compared to others who drop out of high school and do not pursue further education.

As shown in Table 2.3, estimates of the "2nd order dropout rate" among 20-year-olds for Canada and for all provinces are reduced after accounting for this additional education pursued by some dropouts. The 2nd order dropout rate for Canada was 11% — a full percentage point lower than the national 20-year-old dropout rate outlined earlier. Quebec experienced the largest reduction, falling more than two-percentage points (from 16% to 13.8%). This was largely due to the continuation of Quebec high school dropouts in CEGEP programs. The 2nd order dropout rates for Newfoundland, Alberta and P.E.I. were approximately one-percentage point lower than their initial rates.

Together, these findings suggest that the high school dropout rate is fluid - decreasing over time as individuals pursue second chance opportunities in the education systems across Canada.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has presented high school dropout rate estimates at the national and provincial levels. Future YITS cycles will likely reveal even lower dropout rates as the secondary education statuses of some youth in this particular cohort

change over time. Among youth who were still in high school in December 1999 (high school continuers), some will eventually graduate and others will drop out. As well, some current high school dropouts will re-enter the education system to obtain their high school diplomas. As shown above, some dropouts will obtain additional education at the post-secondary level.

8.9% of 20-year-old dropouts took advantage of "second chance" educational opportunities and were enrolled in or had completed a post-secondary program since leaving high school.

TABLE 2.3

Accounting for Dropouts Who Pursue Second Chance Education

	1st Order Dropout Rate	2nd Order Dropout Rate
Canada	*12.0*	*11.0*
Newfoundland	10.5*	9.4*
Prince Edward Island	16.4**	15.5**
Nova Scotia	10.1*	10.0*
New Brunswick	7.6*	7.6*
Quebec	16.0	13.8
Ontario	9.5	8.9
Manitoba	14.8	14.8
Saskatchewan	7.3	6.8
Alberta	12.5	11.5
British Columbia	12.9	12.2

However, looking beyond the dropout rates, what characterizes high school dropouts from the majority of youth that complete their secondary education programs? Do dropouts display a consistent set of characteristics? What factors might help to explain why men are still more likely to drop out? Information to help address such questions is presented in the next chapter.

Notes

1 The typical age of graduation from high school in Canada is 18 years of age (Grade 12) although youth in Quebec usually complete their secondary education at age 17 (Secondary 5, or the equivalent of Grade 11).

2 As part of the 1991 School Leavers Survey, 9,460 Canadian youth aged 18 to 20 were interviewed on a range of topics exploring their high school experiences and circumstances associated with dropping out. Findings are presented in: *Leaving School: Results from a national survey comparing school leavers and high school graduates 18 to 20 years of age* (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics Canada, 1993). In 1995, the School Leavers Follow-up Survey was conducted, which updated information on youth four years after the original survey. Results from the follow-up survey are presented in the following Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics Canada reports: (1) *After High School, The First Years: The first report of the School Leavers Follow-up Survey, 1995 (1996)* and (2) *High School May Not be Enough: An analysis of results from the School Leavers Follow-up Survey, 1995*, (1998).

3 Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 2000.

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Chapter 3

COMPARING HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND DROPOUTS

This chapter focuses on differences between 18-20-year-old high school dropouts and high school graduates.[1] If policy makers and educational administrators are to assist those who might drop out of high school before graduating, it is important to understand the characteristics that differentiate these youth from those who complete their secondary education. Some of the social and personal influences analyzed in this chapter include: family characteristics, academic grades, school experience and attitudes, working while attending school, marital and parental status, and educational aspirations.

3.1 Social Background

The impact of family, economic and social factors on youth outcomes has been the subject of extensive study. It is widely accepted that wealth, status and knowledge are transmitted from parents to children. Research has shown that the more education, the more economic resources, and the higher the occupational status of parents, the more positive will be the educational and occupational outcomes of their children. The relative success of education systems is often judged by the degree to which they obviate, or at least attenuate, these differences among youth. In this section, the impact of family structure and parents' education and occupation on the likelihood of youth completing high school is examined.

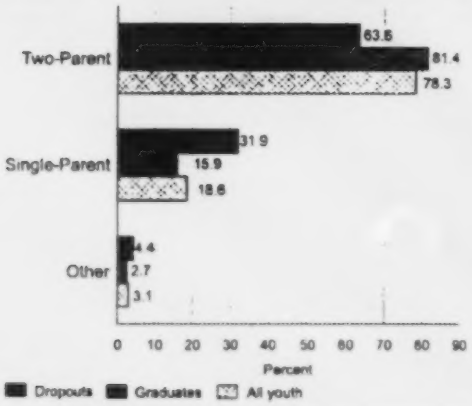
Family Structure

The number of parents or guardians that children live with has been shown to be associated with youth outcomes. For example, the "two-parent" family structure is more likely to offer economic stability and support to young people, which in turn may translate into more positive learning outcomes.

In the survey, youth were asked, "Who were the parents or guardians that you lived with most of the time during high school?" Approximately eight in ten 18-20-year-olds indicated that they lived with both of their parents or guardians while in high school, just under two in ten lived with a single parent, while a very small percentage had alternative living arrangements (e.g., by themselves or in an institution) – Figure 3.1.

FIGURE 3.1

Family Structure During High School



Although the majority of both high school graduates and dropouts lived in a two-parent family during high school, a greater percentage of dropouts than graduates lived with a single parent.

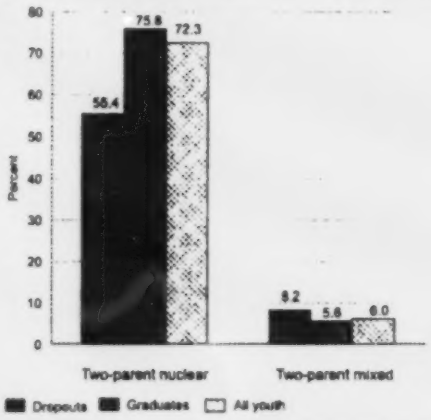
About eight in ten high school graduates lived in two-parent households, compared to just under two-thirds of dropouts. About one-third of dropouts lived with a single-parent compared with about 16% of graduates.

Nearly three-quarters of youth lived in "nuclear" families containing two biological or adoptive parents - Figure 3.2. A much smaller number of youth (6%) lived in "mixed" families (e.g., biological mother and stepfather). Three-quarters of high school graduates lived in nuclear families compared to just over half of dropouts. Dropouts were somewhat more likely than graduates to be a part of a mixed family during high school.

Together, these findings show that graduates and dropouts were most likely to have lived in two-parent families during high school, but the former to a greater extent.

FIGURE 3.2

Two-Parent Family Structure During High School



Compared to graduates, a greater percentage of dropouts lived with a single parent.

Parents' Education

Parents' education constitutes an important mechanism in the transmission of knowledge and wealth from parents to children. The known positive association between educational attainment and socio-economic outcomes means that parental education is a good predictor of family economic resources, which can be used to purchase educational resources for children.

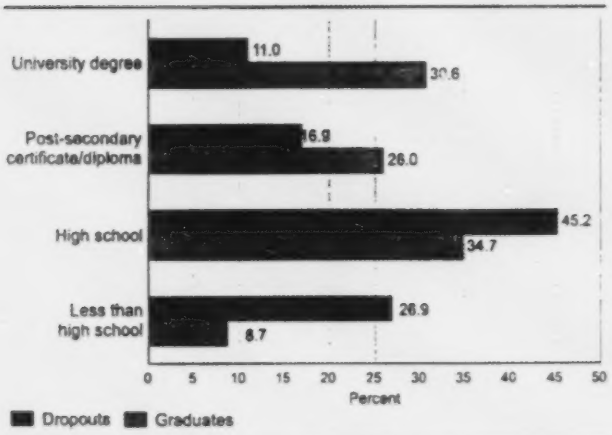
In Figure 3.3, data are presented on the highest level of educational attainment among parents and guardians. If a young person lived with both parents, and one parent had an education level higher than the other, the parent with the higher education level is presented. If the youth lived only with one parent, then the level of education attained by that parent is presented.

The share of graduates who had at least one parent who had completed some type of post-secondary education was two times the share of dropouts (56.6% compared to 27.9%).

The proportion of graduates who had a university-educated parent was close to three times the proportion of dropouts (30.6% compared to 11%). Conversely, the proportion of dropouts who had parents who had not completed high school was three times that of graduates (26.9% compared to 8.7%). As well, approximately seven in ten dropouts compared to just over four in ten graduates had parents whose highest level of education was high school or less. These findings suggest that the higher the level of the parents' education, the more likely their children were to complete high school.

FIGURE 3.3

Highest Educational Attainment of Parents or Guardians



High school graduates were twice as likely as dropouts to have at least one parent who had completed some type of post-secondary education.

Parents' Occupation

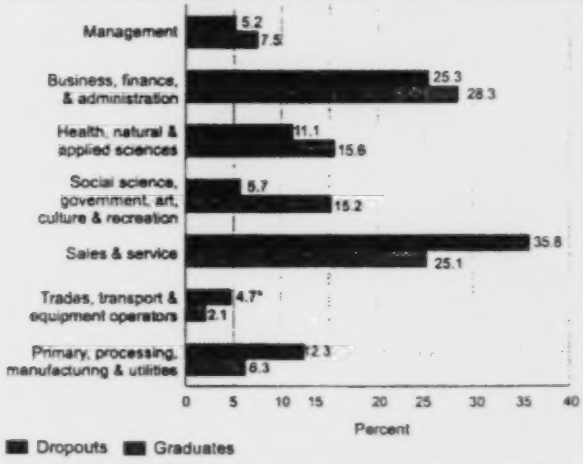
Another factor which has been shown to have an impact on youth outcomes is the parents' occupation. An important and direct impact of the parents' occupation on children may result from the associated economic resources that are available to the family and thus to the youth. These material resources may permit a wider array of social and cultural opportunities.

In the YITS, youth were asked to provide information about their parents' occupation. Responses were coded using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)[2] and then aggregated into the broader SOC categories. In order to simplify the presentation of results, some SOC categories were further collapsed. Although SOC categories do not convey specific details about occupations, they are suggestive of the educational requirements and the remuneration that might be associated with these occupations. Occupational categories are examined separately for mothers and fathers of both high school graduates and dropouts.

Of the seven occupational types classified here, mothers of both graduates and dropouts most often worked in sales and service jobs, or in business, finance and administration occupations. Mothers of dropouts were more likely than those of graduates to be working in sales and service jobs (35.8% and 25.1%); and they were twice as likely to be in primary, processing, manufacturing and utilities occupations, or in trades, transport and equipment operators occupations (totalling 17% of dropouts' mothers and 8.4% of graduates' mothers across these two categories) - Figure 3.4. Graduates, on the other hand, were more likely than dropouts to have mothers employed in occupations in social science, government, art, culture and recreation; health, natural, applied sciences; management; or business, finance, administration occupations. In total, these categories comprised two-thirds of mothers of graduates (66.6%) compared to just under half of the mothers of dropouts (47.3%).

FIGURE 3.4

Occupational Category of Mothers of Graduates & Dropouts



parent who had obtained post-secondary education. Such factors suggest that high school graduates were more likely to grow up in a household where parents had more formal education, and which may have been more economically advantaged.

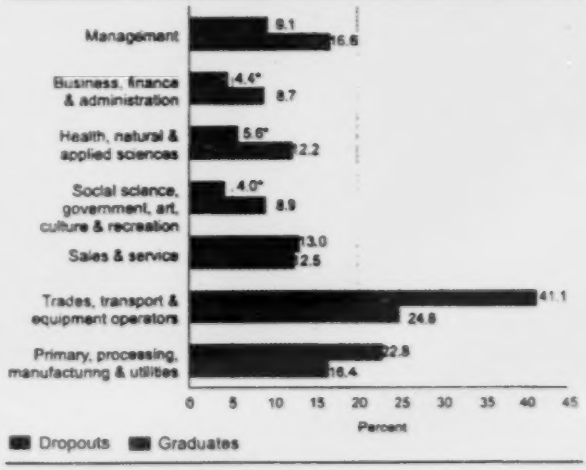
Mothers and fathers of high school graduates were more likely than those of dropouts to work in management, business, finance, government, art, culture or science-related occupations. Such occupations generally require more education, and also typically provide greater economic rewards.

As for fathers, nearly two-thirds of fathers of dropouts (63.9%) were either in trades, transport and equipment operators occupations or in primary, processing, manufacturing, utilities occupations - Figure 3.5. About 41.2% of graduates had fathers who worked in these occupations. On the other hand, fathers of graduates were more likely than those of dropouts to work in management, business, finance, administration, in health, natural and applied science or in social science, government, art, culture and recreation (46.4% compared to 23.1% with the four occupational categories totalled).

These findings show that parents of high school graduates, both mothers and fathers, typically worked in occupations that require more formal education and which usually yield greater economic rewards (e.g., management, health, natural and applied sciences). As shown in the previous section, graduates were also more likely than dropouts to have a

FIGURE 3.5

Occupational Category of Fathers of Graduates & Dropouts



3.2 Academic Grades

Governments, educators and employers are concerned about the extent to which youth are prepared for employment in today's knowledge-based economy. Grades achieved in high school provide some indication of the skills and knowledge youth have acquired. Through the YITS, information was obtained on overall grade averages achieved in the last year of high school, in the last mathematics course and last main language course.

High school dropouts were more likely to obtain lower overall grade averages than were graduates - Table 3.1. More than four-tenths of graduates (42.3%), compared to about a third as many dropouts (12.9%) achieved at least an "A" grade average (80%) in their last year of high school. Dropouts were more likely than graduates to have obtained overall grades under 60% (17.8% compared to 1%). Male dropouts achieved lower marks than either female dropouts or male graduates.

TABLE 3.1

Grade Averages in High School (Percent)

	Graduates			Dropouts		
	Total	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*
Overall Grade Average - Final Year						
80-100% — A	42.3	35.5	48.5	12.9	10.7	16.4
70-79% — B	43.2	45.8	40.8	34.5	31.3	39.6
60-69% — C	13.6	17.4	10.1	34.8	38.5	29.0
50-59% — D	0.9	1.2	0.6	14.2	15.6	12.0
under 50% — F	—	—	—	3.6	4.0	3.0*
Grade Average - Most Recent Math Course						
80-100% — A	38.2	37.1	39.2	25.8	25.4	26.4
70-79% — B	31.5	32.4	30.7	30.3	29.0	32.2
60-69% — C	22.1	22.2	22.1	28.7	32.6	22.5
50-59% — D	8.0	8.1	7.8	12.6	10.9	15.1
under 50% — F	0.2*	0.2*	0.3*	2.7*	2.0*	3.8*
Grade Average - Most Recent Main Language Course						
80-100% —A	45.0	35.3	53.9	20.5	15.3	28.6
70-79% — B	36.0	38.9	33.2	31.2	28.8	35.1
60-69% — C	16.2	21.9	10.8	32.6	36.6	26.2
50-59% — D	2.8	3.8	2.0*	13.1	16.2	8.4*
under 50% — F	—	—	—	2.6*	3.1*	1.7*

A comparison of marks obtained in the most recent mathematics and main language courses reveals substantially lower achievement among dropouts. The differences were most pronounced for the language courses: the share of dropouts obtaining an "A" average (20.5%) was less than half that of graduates (45%). Young men, both dropouts and graduates, were less likely than young women to excel.

Mathematics grades obtained by young men and women were more similar compared to their language grades, especially among graduates. However, the percentage of women dropouts who were low achievers (grades under 60%) in mathematics was higher than for their male counterparts (18.9% compared to 12.9%).

However, not all dropouts achieved low overall grades. Almost half achieved a "B" grade average (70 to 79%) or better, and another one-third obtained a "C" average (60 to 69%). Poor academic performance may not be a prevalent reason for dropping out for these youth. Perhaps surprisingly, only a very small percentage of dropouts, 3.6%, reported having an overall grade average under 50%.

While high school dropouts obtained lower grades in their last year of high school compared to graduates, not all dropouts performed poorly in school.

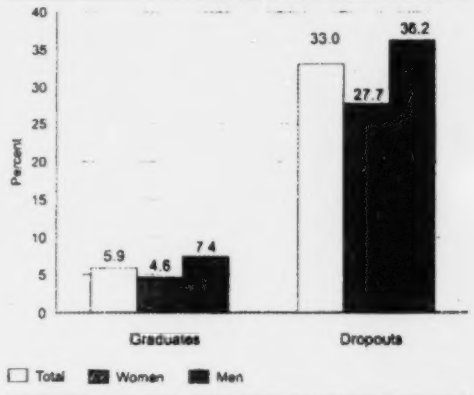
Still, overall, dropouts, and particularly male dropouts, obtained substantially lower grades than graduates – a fact that reveals why some of them might have withdrawn from high school. Low grades potentially can jeopardize the ability to complete high school.

The Impact of Repeating an Elementary Grade

Young people were asked whether or not they had ever had to repeat a grade in elementary school. Repeating a grade could be an important marker for those who later drop out.

FIGURE 3.6

Incidence of Elementary Grade Repetition



High school dropouts were more than five times as likely (33% compared to 5.9% of graduates) to have repeated an elementary school grade – Figure 3.6. A higher share of young men, whether graduates or dropouts, had failed a grade compared to young women.

Why do some of those who had repeated an elementary grade eventually graduate from high school, while others do not? Additional analysis beyond this report will help shed light on the personal, school-related and socio-demographic factors that influence youth who experience academic failure to overcome a learning set-back and eventually complete high school. Further research is needed to better understand the extent to which academic factors influence some youth to complete their studies, and others to leave school prematurely. Why, for example, do some high school students achieve relatively low grades in high school but do not drop out? Or conversely, why do some with reasonably good marks decide to leave school?

TABLE 3.2

High School Engagement Indicators (Percent)

	Graduates			Dropouts		
	Total	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*
% Most or All of the Time:						
I got along well with teachers.	88.6	85.0	91.8	60.1	53.4	71.2
I did as little work as possible; I just wanted to get by.	14.9	20.8	9.4	34.5	39.6	26.0
I paid attention to the teacher.	82.1	76.8	87.0	60.1	54.8	68.6
I was interested in what I was learning in class.	60.4	54.8	65.7	43.6	38.3	52.2
I felt like an outsider or like I was left out of things at school.	3.5	3.7	3.3	14.2	13.5	15.1
I completed my homework on time.	80.4	74.0	86.3	48.1	39.7	61.5
% Agree or Strongly Agree:						
I thought that many of the things we were learning in class were useless.	38.7	40.4	37.3	55.4	59.1	49.5
I was treated with as much respect as other students in my class.	91.7	91.5	92.0	74.4	76.5	71.0
I had friends at school whom I could talk to about personal things.	94.5	93.4	95.5	84.0	83.9	84.3
I liked to participate in many school activities, for example clubs, sports, drama.	62.1	61.8	62.5	37.8	41.4	32.0
School was often a waste of time.	13.2	16.6	10.0	36.3	39.8	30.4
People at school were interested in what I had to say.	90.5	89.9	91.0	78.8	80.3	76.4
% 3 hours or Fewer:						
How many hours each week did you spend on homework outside class, during free periods and at home?	37.0	45.9	28.9	62.7	68.1	53.8

3.3 School Engagement

Understanding the reasons for dropping out of high school can be further enhanced by looking at the extent to which youth are involved in school academically and socially. The concept of school engagement takes into consideration the way in which young people participate and identify with school.

Youth were asked a number of questions about various components of their engagement with school. As shown in Table 3.2, high school graduates consistently revealed more positive attitudes about school, work-ethic behaviours

and more favourable school assessments, compared to dropouts.

One of the biggest differences between high school graduates and dropouts was demonstrated in response to the statement "I completed my homework on time." Eight in ten graduates compared with half of dropouts indicated that they completed their homework most or all of the time. Male dropouts were least likely to do so. High school dropouts were also more likely than graduates (62.7% compared to 37%) to say that they spent three or fewer hours on homework each week in their last year of high school.

Another larger variation in responses was obtained to the statement "I got along well with teachers." A larger share of school graduates (88.6%) than dropouts (60.1%) remarked that they got along well with their teachers most or all of the time. Again, male dropouts were less likely to be positive in their assessment.

A notable difference was also found in response to the statement "I liked to participate in many school activities, for example clubs, sports, drama." A majority of graduates agreed or strongly agreed with this statement versus a minority of dropouts. Here, female dropouts were least likely to agree.

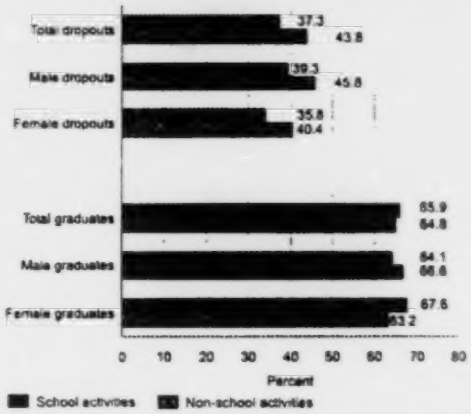
Additional information solicited about *school-based* extra-curricular activities shows the differential involvement of graduates and dropouts. Two-thirds of the former participated in some type of school activity, compared to just under four in ten dropouts. Among graduates, females were somewhat more likely than males to participate, while among dropouts, females were somewhat less likely to be involved - Figure 3.7.

Individuals' activities away from school were also documented. As shown in Figure 3.7, high school graduates were more likely than dropouts to also be involved in *non-school*-based activities. However, the difference is not as great as with school-based activities, as dropouts displayed somewhat greater participation in activities out of school versus in school. Graduates tended to participate in both types of activities equally.

The results on school engagement reveal that dropouts displayed somewhat less favourable attitudes and behaviours with respect to school, less favourable perceptions about their relationships with teachers and other students, poorer study habits, and less engagement in extra-curricular school activities. Male dropouts, in particular, appear to have been less engaged and more dissatisfied with their academic experience. For example, they were clearly less likely to be "interested in what [they were] learning in class" and more likely to believe that "many things [they were] learning in class were useless."

FIGURE 3.7

Participation in High School and Non-School Extra-Curricular Activities

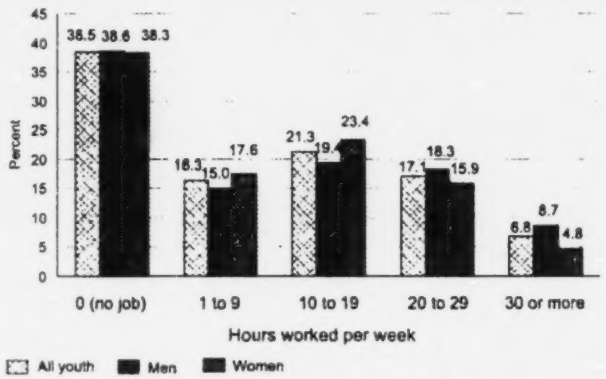


Relative to high school graduates, dropouts revealed attitudes and behaviours indicative of less academic engagement in school. Male dropouts, in particular, appear to have been less engaged in school.

These observations do not mean that dropouts were largely disengaged from school, whether in terms of academic or social participation or identification. On average, they displayed attitudes and behaviours that would suggest that they had some interest in their high school education and experiences. Yet, relative to those who did complete high school, dropouts, and in particular male dropouts, seem to have been less engaged.

FIGURE 3.8

Hours Worked for Pay Each Week During Last Year of High School



3.4 Working During High School

Youth typically begin to work for pay during the high school years. Work can be valuable to their development. By exposing them to workplace cultures, it helps teach important workplace and life skills including interpersonal skills, communication skills, and management of personal financial resources. Yet, research suggests that too many hours of paid work may have a negative impact on academic achievement and thus on the likelihood of young people completing high school.

During the last year of high school, 61.5% of youth worked for pay and 38.5% did not - Figure 3.8. Young men and women were equally likely to have a paid job. Working 1 to 19 hours weekly (37.6%) was more common than working 20 or more hours a week (23.9%). Women were somewhat more likely to work a small to moderate number of hours, while men were somewhat more likely to work longer hours.

The relationship between working for pay during high school and completing high school was examined. Results indicate that high school dropouts were less likely to have worked for pay during their last high school year - 48.3% of dropouts compared to 37.3% of graduates had no job at all (Table 3.3). Female dropouts were least likely to have worked, while both male and

TABLE 3.3

Paid Weekly Work Hours During Last Year of High School (Percent)

Hours Worked Per Week	Graduates			Dropouts		
	Total	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*
0 - No job	37.3	37.8	36.9	48.3	45.9	52.1
1 to 9	17.1	15.2	18.7	10.5	11.4	9.0*
10 to19	23.2	21.4	24.9	12.7	12.4	13.3
20 to 29	17.0	18.5	15.7	15.9	16.2	15.4
30 or more	5.4	7.1	3.9	12.7	14.2	10.3

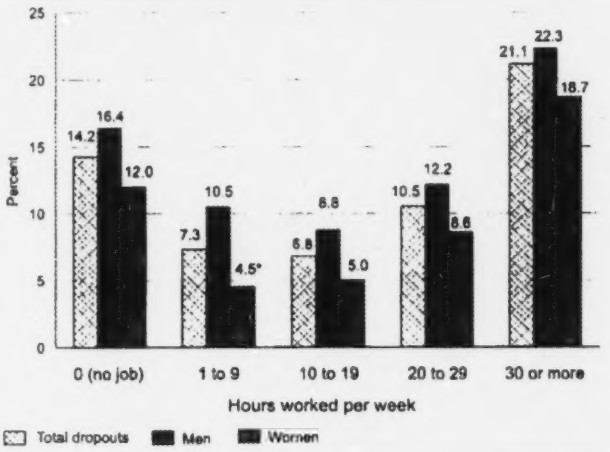
female graduates were most likely to have worked.

High school graduates were more likely than dropouts to work between 1 and 19 hours per week (40.3% compared with 23.2%), while about an equal percentage of graduates and dropouts worked 20 to 29 hours. As expected, a minority of youth worked 30 or more weekly hours during high school – although dropouts were somewhat more likely than graduates to have worked such long weekly hours.

Surprisingly, a higher percentage of those who *did not* work for pay during their last year of high school (14.2%) dropped out, compared to those that did work for pay (9.5%). Dropout rates were lowest (6.8%), on average, among youth who worked a moderate number of weekly hours (10 to 19) (Figure 3.9). Among those who worked the equivalent of full-time weekly hours (30 or more), dropout rates increased substantially (21.1%).

FIGURE 3.9

Dropout Rates by Hours Worked for Pay Each Week During Last Year of High School



Dropout rates were lowest among youth who worked a moderate number of weekly hours, and highest among those who worked the equivalent of full-time weekly hours. Surprisingly, a higher percentage of those who did NOT work in their last year of high school dropped out, compared to those who did work.

As noted above, about six in ten youth worked for pay during their last high school year. However, a number of high school youth worked without pay, either in volunteer activities or for their family business or farm. Results on volunteer work are presented in the next chapter.

Approximately one in ten of all 18-20-year-olds (10.8%) worked unpaid weekly hours for their family business or farm, including a slightly higher percentage of male (12.5%) than female youth (9.2%). Ten percent of young people who did unpaid work for their family dropped out of high school. As with youth who worked for pay, a greater percentage of youth who worked 30 hours or more each week of unpaid work ended up dropping out (18.7%).

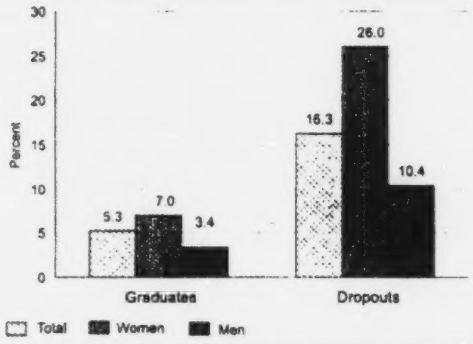
Additional research will help to uncover the process by which working is related to high school completion or non-completion. Does the positive relationship between working long hours and dropping out, for example, simply reflect a prior disengaged attitude towards school? What helps to account for the relationship shown for some youth between *not working* during school and dropping out? Ongoing analysis of the YITS database, and particularly of these same youth as they age, will help to address such questions.

3.5 Marital and Parental Status of Youth

Another personal factor - being married or living with a partner - might have an impact on whether or not youth complete high school or further their education after high school. Dropouts were almost three times as likely as graduates (16.3% compared to 5.3%) to be married or living with a partner (see Figure 3.10) at the time of the YITS in early 2000 (but not necessarily while they were in high school).

FIGURE 3.10

Percentage of Graduates & Dropouts Married or Living with a Partner, in 2000



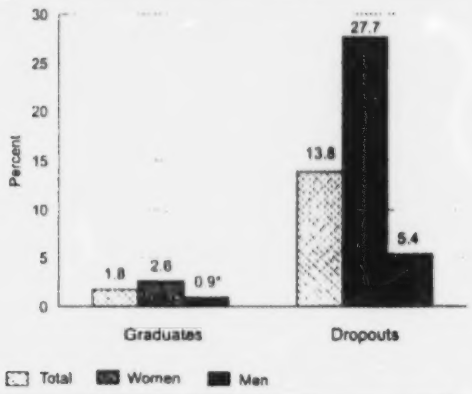
Of those in a relationship, dropouts were more likely to be "living with" someone rather than being married (13.9% versus 2.4%*). The results are particularly pronounced for young female dropouts, a quarter of whom said they were in such a relationship (26% in total including 21.7% living with someone, and 4.3%* married). In comparison, a much smaller percentage of female graduates (7%) as well as male dropouts (10.4%) were part of such a relationship.

A small number of all 18-20-year-olds (3.4%) indicated that they had dependent children as of early 2000, including more females (5.3%) than males (1.5%). Nine in ten of these youth (89.2%) had one dependent child, another one-tenth had two children (10.1%), and a very small percentage had three or more children.

High school dropouts (13.8%) were more likely than graduates (1.8%) to have dependent children - Figure 3.11. Female dropouts were substantially more likely to have dependents. More than one-quarter of all female dropouts (27.7%) had children compared to 5.4% of male dropouts.

FIGURE 3.11

Percentage of Graduates & Dropouts with Dependent Children, in 2000



Female dropouts were much more likely to be living with a partner or to be married, and also more likely to have children by early 2000.

More than half of the female dropouts who had children (51.4%) were single, just under half were living with or married to someone (46.8%), while the remainder were separated or divorced. Among female graduates with children, somewhat fewer were single (44.9%), with just over half (54.4%) living with someone or married. Fewer male dropouts and graduates with dependent children, compared to their

female counterparts, were single (42.6% of male dropouts and 40.6% of male graduates), while a greater proportion were living with someone or married (57% of male dropouts and 59.4% of male graduates).

Overall, female dropouts in particular were a lot more likely to be living with or married to a partner, and also more likely to have children at the time of the interview in 2000. The fact that more than half of female dropouts with children were single mothers suggests that some of these young women may encounter problems when trying to complete high school in the future.

3.6 Peer Influence and Individual Behaviours

The completion of high school may be influenced by social networks, including plans made by friends regarding further education. As well, the types of behaviours in which some teens engage may be associated with the decision to complete high school.

Graduates more often than dropouts were surrounded by a peer group with educational plans: four-fifths of high school graduates compared to just over one-half of the dropouts indicated that "most" or "all" of their close friends planned to further their education past the high school level – Table 3.4. Fewer male dropouts (48.6%) than female dropouts (58.4%) had friends with such plans.

Negative behaviours were more frequent among dropouts than graduates. For example, dropouts were more likely to skip class frequently – 57.6% of dropouts compared to 21.2% of graduates skipped class once a week or more.

Dropouts, whether male or female, used alcohol or drugs more often, compared to graduates. Male dropouts were prone to using drugs on a weekly basis. Dropout and graduate males used these substances more frequently than their female counterparts. However, dropouts and graduates were more similar in their frequent consumption of alcohol. (The gap was only 9%, whereas it was 19% for frequent use of drugs.)

TABLE 3.4

Peer Influence and Behaviours Among Graduates & Dropouts

	Graduates			Dropouts		
	Total	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*
Peer Influence						
% most or all close friends planning to further education or training beyond high school	79.4	76.4	82.3	52.3	48.6	58.4
Behaviours						
% skipped class once a week or more	21.2	25.9	16.9	57.6	60.3	53.4
% drank alcoholic beverages once a week or more during last year of high school	29.3	37.6	21.7	38.3	43.0	30.8
% used marijuana or hash once a week or more during last year of high school	9.1	12.1	6.4	28.1	34.4	17.9

It cannot be concluded that all dropouts abuse alcohol or drugs; only a minority use them weekly. Still, the frequency of use by dropouts should be of some concern as such habits may be symptomatic of problems that encourage youth to withdraw from school. Additional analysis might determine how these behaviours are associated with other family, school or personal factors.

3.7 Educational Aspirations

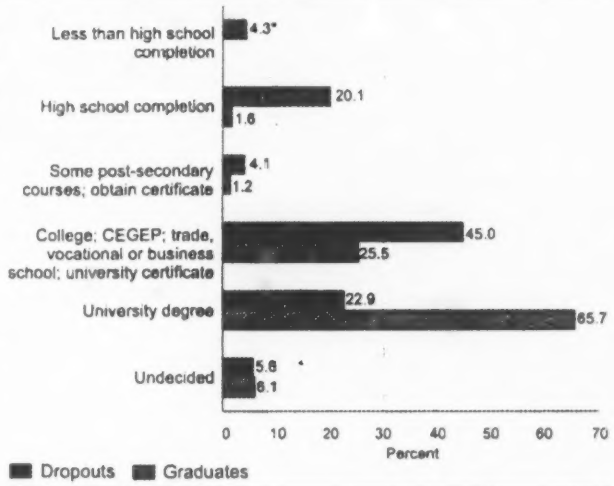
Information on educational aspirations can indicate how youth value education and can provide information on their lifelong learning goals. A large majority of dropouts indicated that they would like to complete their secondary education or more, someday - Figure 3.12. Almost half of the dropouts aspired to completing college or CEGEP, trade, vocational, business or university certificate programs. One-fifth of dropouts wanted to complete high school and nothing further. Only a very few dropouts did not wish to complete high school some time in the future.

Two-thirds of the high school graduates (65.7%) aspired to completing some type of university degree program, compared to a third as many dropouts (22.9%). Relative to dropouts, high school graduates were less likely to aspire to completing college, trade, vocational or other types of non-university post-secondary programs.

Almost all high school dropouts desired to complete at least a high school education in the future. Graduates were much more likely to aspire to completing a university degree.

FIGURE 3.12

Educational Aspirations of Graduates & Dropouts



3.8 The Process of Dropping Out

The previous sections of this chapter have focused on differences between high school graduates and dropouts. Among the dropout population, further information was obtained about the process of dropping out.

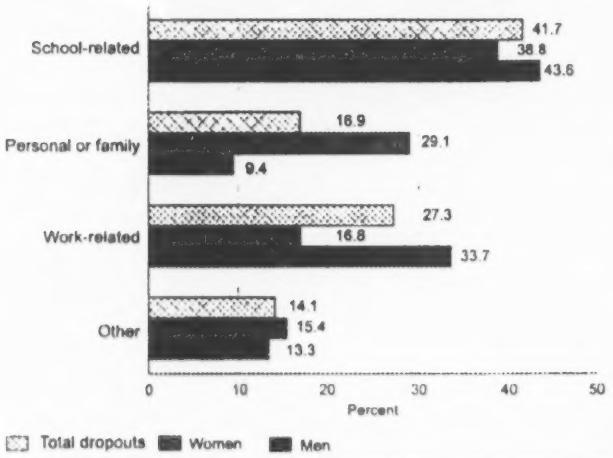
Some youth leave and return to high school a number of times before finally dropping out completely. About six in ten dropouts (59.6%) said that they had left school one time previously, one-fifth (18.9%) had left twice, and a small number (6.3%) had left three or more times. No clear differences were found by gender.

Dropouts were also asked to cite the main reason why they left school without graduating with respect to the most recent occurrence.[3] They most often cited school-related reasons for leaving (41.7%), followed by work-related reasons (27.3%), personal or family-related reasons (16.9%), and other reasons (14.1%) - Figure 3.13

The most important school-related reason was that they were "bored or not interested" in school (19.9% of all dropouts). Young men were somewhat more likely than young women to mention school-related reasons for leaving - with this gender difference being mainly attributable to the fact that more young men had been "kicked out" of school (9% compared with 4.3% of young women).

FIGURE 3.13

Main Reason for Dropping Out of High School



Both male and female dropouts most often cited school-related reasons for dropping out. Besides this, male dropouts were more likely to specify work-related reasons for leaving, while females were more likely to cite personal or family-related reasons.

Of the remaining reasons provided for dropping out, men (33.7%) were twice as likely as women (16.8%) to say that work-related factors constituted the main reason. Specifically, these male dropouts indicated that they "wanted to work" (19.8%) or that they "had to work because of money problems" (13.9%).

Female dropouts (29.1%), on the other hand, were much more likely than males (16.9%) to cite personal or family-related reasons - the majority indicating that they left because they were "pregnant" or "caring for their own child" (15.9% of all female dropouts). Very few male leavers specified that a dependent child constituted the main reason for leaving.

To recap, dissatisfaction with school or other school-related problems was cited more often as the primary reason for leaving. But some dropouts leave for other primary reasons - work for young men and pregnancy and child rearing for young women.

Many of the reasons cited by dropouts for leaving school were the same in the YITS and the 1991 School Leavers Survey. School-related factors constituted the main reason for leaving school in both. As well, the higher incidence of work-related reasons for leaving mentioned by some male dropouts and the personal or family reasons cited by females are both consistent.

The YITS asked dropouts to evaluate their decision to leave high school. Most were "sorry" (45.9%) or they had "mixed feelings" (29.6%) about having left. More female dropouts (52.9%) compared to male dropouts (41.7%) regretted having dropped out. Analysis from future YITS survey cycles will shed light on whether those who regretted having left, later return to school to obtain their high school diplomas or additional education. The feeling of regret expressed by many dropouts suggests that they come to recognize the value of a high school education after having dropped out.

3.9 Summary

Overall, the results presented from the YITS in this chapter provide a first broad look at characteristics that differentiate high school dropouts and graduates among this cohort of 18-20-year-olds. Some factors were more likely to be associated with either dropouts or graduates, in terms of academic grades, school engagement, family background characteristics, working during school and other personal or social experiences. Furthermore, factors that differentiated dropouts and graduates were sometimes accentuated when considering the youth's gender. Findings showed, for example, that male dropouts displayed less engagement with their high school educational experience than their female counterparts, or male or female graduates. It remains to be determined why this and other tendencies existed. More generally, a fuller understanding of the factors associated with failing to complete high school, and what might be done to assist dropouts to complete their secondary education, will require further analysis.

Notes

1 Unless specified, high school continuers, or those youth still in high school as of December 1999, are omitted from the findings presented in this chapter.

2 Statistics Canada, Standard Occupational Classification (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1991).

3 Youth provided one of eleven different responses. These represent four broad types of reasons for leaving school: school-related, personal- or family-related, work-related, or other reasons. School-related reasons include "bored/ not interested," "problems with school work," "problems with teachers," "kicked out" and "missing a few credits/ not worth continuing." Personal- or family-related reasons include "own health," "pregnant/ caring for own child" and "problems at home." Work-related reasons include "had to work/ money problems," "wanted to work." Other reasons constitute the fourth type.

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Chapter 4

PATHWAYS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

The focus of this chapter is on pathways followed by 18-20-year-old youth after high school. These youth can be divided into five groups according to their school status – high school dropouts with no post-secondary education (PSE); high school graduates with no PSE; post-secondary continuers; post-secondary graduates; and post-secondary leavers (individuals who began a PSE program but left before graduating). Section 4.1 describes the five groups, by gender, by family status and by the educational attainment of their parents. Section 4.2 focuses on the (self-assessed) quality of young people's skills after they leave high school. The extent to which different groups of youth have taken career planning courses or courses to gain work experience or job skills, such as co-op, apprenticeship, work-study or technical/vocational courses while in high school is examined in Section 4.3. This section also examines the extent to which youth may have gained other education/training through volunteer activities. Section 4.4 describes the employment status of youth. The focus of Section 4.5 is on 18-20-year-olds who continued their education at the post-secondary level; in particular, the experiences of post-secondary continuers and leavers during their first post-secondary year are compared. Barriers to post-secondary participation are examined in Section 4.6.

4.1 Characteristics of School Leavers and School Continuers

Participation in Post-secondary Education

Chapter 3 reported on the high school leaving status of youth aged 18-20. What pathways did these youth follow once they were out of high school? As Table 4.1 shows, as of December 1999, 11.8% were high school dropouts with no post-secondary education. This percentage was higher for males (14.7%) than it was for females (9.1%). Roughly one-quarter of both males and females were high school graduates who had not gone on to post-secondary education as of December 1999. Just over half of youth – the largest group — were enroled in post-secondary education (PSE continuers) with the post-secondary participation rate being much higher for females than for males – 57.4% versus 46.9%. A small proportion of 18-20-year-olds had already completed a program of study at the post-secondary level (with this percentage being higher for females than for males). And 6.1% of the young men had been enrolled at the post-secondary level but had left before completing the program; 5.2% of women were post-secondary leavers.

Over 60% of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school had experience with post-secondary education. The post-secondary participation rate was much higher for females than for males.

Table 4.2 shows the post-high school status of 18-20-year-olds by province. The proportion of high school dropouts with no PSE ranged from 15.3% in Manitoba, 14.9% in Alberta and 14.3% in Quebec to 8.8% in New Brunswick and 8.0% in Saskatchewan. The rates in Manitoba and Alberta reflect relatively high percentages for both males and females compared to other provinces (provincial data on the post-high-school status of males and females are shown in Appendix Table 4.1). In the case of Quebec, the percentage of male dropouts with no PSE was 18.7%, the corresponding figure for females was 9.8%. The rates in New Brunswick and Saskatchewan were relatively low for both males and females.

TABLE 4.1

After High School – Education Status of 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School as of December 1999, by Gender

	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All
	Percent			Number		
High school dropouts, no PSE	14.7	9.1	11.8	76,237	47,672	123,909
High school graduates, no PSE	28.6	23.4	26.0	148,496	122,470	270,967
Post-secondary continuers	46.9	57.4	52.2	243,417	300,902	544,319
Post-secondary graduates	3.7	4.9	4.3	19,278	25,533	44,810
Post-secondary leavers	6.1	5.2	5.7	31,927	27,543	59,471
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*519,355*	*524,120*	*1,043,475*

TABLE 4.2

After High School – Education Status of 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School as of December 1999, by Province (Percent)[a]

	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.
High school dropouts, no PSE	9.7	11.7*	11.0	8.8	14.3	10.1	15.3	8.0	14.9	11.2
High school graduates, no PSE	23.6	26.0	18.6	28.6	7.6	35.0	29.4	34.5	34.6	30.6
Post-secondary continuers	54.3	51.2	57.8	50.1	62.3	48.7	44.4	46.4	42.1	50.5
Post-secondary graduates	4.0*	7.0*	5.0	7.4*	7.6	2.0	4.9	4.7	3.5*	3.5*
Post-secondary leavers	8.4*	4.1*	7.6	5.1	8.2	4.2	6.0	6.4	4.9	4.2
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*

a For the purposes of this analysis, province refers to the location where the individual was last in high school

In Saskatchewan, Alberta and Ontario, just over one-third of high school graduates had not gone on to PSE as of December 1999; rates were similar for males and females in Alberta and were slightly higher for males than for females in Ontario and Saskatchewan. Subsequent cycles of the Youth in Transition Survey will provide information regarding how many of this group later do go on to pursue a post-secondary education.

The percentage of 18-20-year-olds who were post-secondary continuers was relatively high in Quebec (62.3%) – in other words, there was a high rate of post-secondary participation among those who did graduate from high school. The share of post-secondary continuers was also relatively high in Nova Scotia (57.8%) and Newfoundland (54.3%), with the rates being particularly high for females in both provinces. This rate was lowest in Alberta — a reflection of relatively low rates for both males (39.3%) and females (44.9%) — and in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

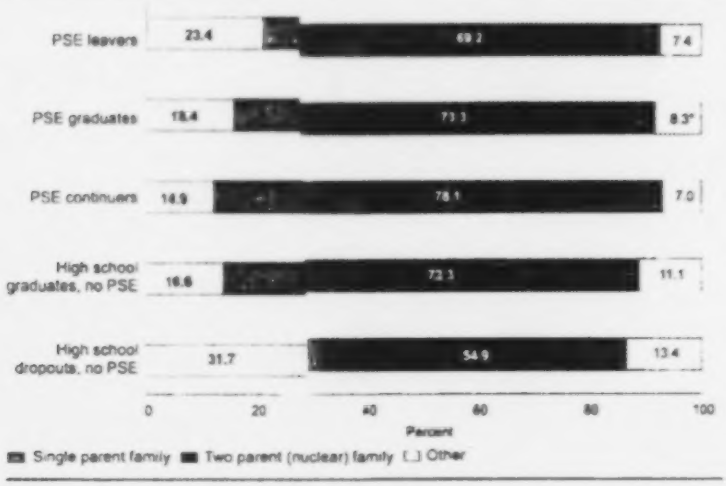
In all provinces, small proportions of 18-20-year-olds had either already completed a program of study at the post-secondary level or were PSE leavers. As will be shown later in this chapter, many of those who had completed PSE had attended a CEGEP[1] or community college, a trade or vocational school or another non-university, post-secondary institution (see Section 4.5).

Post-secondary Participation and Family Characteristics

Like the relationship between family structure and the likelihood of graduating from high school (see Chapter 3), a relationship exists between family structure and the pathways followed by youth once they are out of high school. High school dropouts who have no further education at the post-secondary level were much more likely than other 18-20-year-olds to have lived in a single-parent family during high school – 31.7%, compared to 16.6% of high school graduates with no PSE and 14.9% of post-secondary continuers – Figure 4.1. Both high school dropouts and high school

FIGURE 4.1

Family Structure and Education Status, 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School



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graduates with no PSE were also more likely to have lived in other types of families while in high school – in mixed families (one biological and one step-parent), with other relatives or guardians, or on their own. Post-secondary continuers, on the other hand, were more likely to have had a two-parent nuclear (both biological parents) family while in high school.

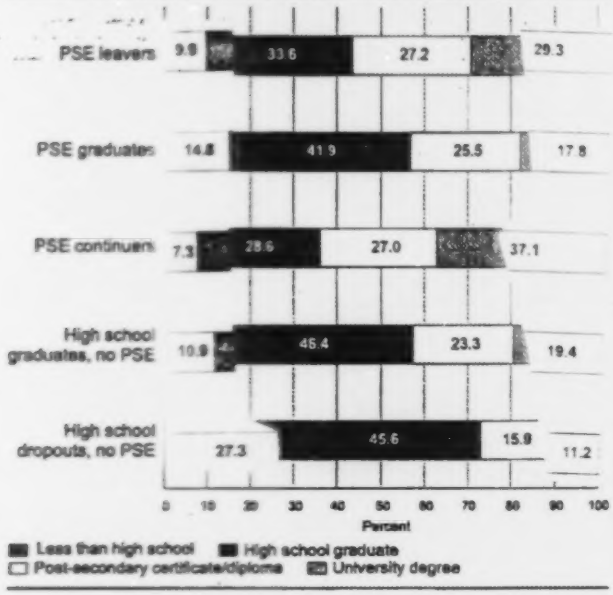
Similarly, past research has shown a strong relationship between the educational attainment of parents and their children. Both high school dropouts and high school graduates with no PSE, as well as PSE graduates, tended disproportionately to come from families where the highest level of education of either parent was high school completion – Figure 4.2. In contrast, post-secondary continuers and leavers were more likely to come from families where one or both parents had a university degree – 37.1% of 18-20-year-olds who were PSE continuers and 29.3% of PSE leavers had at least one parent with a university degree. Only 11.2% of high school dropouts with no PSE had a parent with a university degree.

4.2 After High School – Self-assessment of Skills

In today's knowledge-based, globalized economy, skills and learning are fundamental to both national economic growth and individual success in the labour market. And while not all jobs require highly sophisticated technical skills, some skills are regarded as essential for providing the foundation upon which learning and new skills acquisition are based. Provincial ministries of education across the country assess their success in part by the extent to which their students exhibit strong reading, writing, and numeracy skills. And increasing emphasis is being placed on computer skills, communication skills and problem-solving abilities.

FIGURE 4.2

Youth Education Status December 1999 and Parental Educational Attainment



Assessing the skill levels of young adults is important for two reasons. First, as shown above, significant numbers of 18-20-year-olds either leave the education system before completing high school or, if they have completed high school, have no further education or training at the post-secondary level. Many of them thus enter directly into the labour market with the skills they acquired during their elementary and high school years. Second, research on education and training consistently finds that those who already have strong skills are the ones most likely to add to those skills – investments in further education and training by both individuals themselves and by employers tend to focus on more highly educated workers. To what extent is this kind of sorting evident among 18-20-year-olds? Do individuals with stronger skills go on

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to post-secondary studies while those with weaker skills forego further education and instead enter directly into the labour market?

Skill Ratings Are Highest for Reading and Lowest for Math and Computer Skills

The Youth in Transition Survey asked 18-20-year-olds to provide an assessment of their skill levels. These self-assessments were generally highest for *reading skills*: close to 60% of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school felt their reading skills were very good or excellent, while only 8.0 % assessed their reading skills as being poor – Table 4.3. *Math skills* and *computer skills* received the lowest ratings of the six skill sets that were assessed. (Results for each of the skill dimensions are shown by province in Appendix Table 4.2).

Self-assessments of Skills

Self-assessments of skill levels add valuable information to measures of educational attainment, increasing the range of outcomes observed.

Researchers have compared how well such subjective, self-reported measures match the results of objective test-based assessments for adult populations. Their findings suggest that, while the two approaches tend to produce overall similar results, significant differences in reliability exist for particular sub-populations, for example, for males compared to females. Given their recent experience with the education system, however, 18-20-year-olds should be reasonably reliably informed regarding their skill levels. Nevertheless, self-assessment results presented in this report should be treated as indicative rather than definitive measures of actual skill.

TABLE 4.3

Self-Assessment of Skills of 18-20-Year-olds No Longer in High School (Percent)

	High school Dropouts, no PSE	High school Graduates, no PSE	PSE Continuers	PSE Graduates	PSE Leavers	All
1. Writing skills						
Poor/fair	28.0	16.2	10.0	12.6	13.0	14.1
Very good/Excellent	31.2	40.9	53.8	45.8	47.9	47.1
2. Reading skills						
Poor/fair	17.9	9.8	5.2	4.7*	7.1*	8.0
Very good/Excellent	42.0	52.5	65.1	58.6	60.8	58.5
3. Communication skills						
Poor/fair	22.5	15.0	10.8	13.1	13.8	13.5
Very good/Excellent	37.6	46.8	51.8	47.0	51.1	48.6
4. Problem-solving skills						
Poor/fair	19.5	12.4	8.3	8.3*	11.2	10.9
Very good/Excellent	31.7	38.7	46.9	44.4	47.3	42.9
5. Math skills						
Poor/fair	41.1	36.1	27.2	31.6	28.2	31.4
Very good/Excellent	24.4	25.6	38.5	29.5	34.3	32.8
6. Computer skills						
Poor/fair	52.5	33.8	21.5	30.3	32.1	29.4
Very good/Excellent	16.5	29.0	44.4	35.6	38.4	36.4

Youth who go no further in their education than high school are hampered in two ways when they enter the labour market: first, they have fewer education credentials than those who do pursue a post-secondary education; and second, they enter the labour market with weaker skills on a number of dimensions.

Ratings on All Skills Are Lowest for High School Dropouts

The ratings for each of the skill sets by education status were very consistent – generally, larger proportions of high school dropouts with no PSE assessed their skill levels as being poor/fair for each of the six skill sets and the percentages in the poor/fair category decreased with increasing levels of education. On the other hand, the percentage reporting that their skills were very good or excellent rose with education level, with PSE continuers generally assessing their skill levels as being stronger than was the case for the other groups. The percentage of post-secondary continuers reporting that their skills were very good/excellent was highest for *reading skills*, at 65.1%, and lowest for *math skills*, at 38.5%.

These results suggest that youth who go no further in their education than high school are hampered in two ways when they enter the labour market: first, they have fewer education credentials than those who do pursue a post-secondary education; and second, they enter the labour market with weaker skills on a number of dimensions.

Gender Differences in Skill Ratings

How young men and young women assess their skills is shown in Table 4.4. Clear gender differences are apparent. Higher proportions of young women than young men judged their skills to be very good/excellent in reading and writing, and to a somewhat lesser extent, in communication skills. In contrast, larger proportions of young men rated their problem-solving, math and computer skills as being stronger than young women did.

TABLE 4.4

Self-assessment of Skills of 18-20-Year-olds No Longer in High School, by Gender (Percent)

	Men	Women	All 18-20-year-olds not in high school
1. Writing skills			
Poor/fair	19.4	8.8	14.1
Very good/ excellent	39.9	53.9	47.1
2. Reading skills			
Poor/fair	11.2	5.0	8.0
Very good/ excellent	51.1	65.6	58.5
3. Communi-cation skills			
Poor/fair	15.2	11.9	13.5
Very good/ excellent	45.8	51.1	48.6
4. Problem-solving skills			
Poor/fair	9.9	11.8	10.9
Very good/ excellent	47.1	38.6	42.9
5. Math skills			
Poor/fair	26.7	36.4	31.4
Very good/ excellent	37.7	27.7	32.8
6. Computer skills			
Poor/fair	28.5	30.3	29.4
Very good/ excellent	40.7	31.9	36.4

4.3 Career Planning, Job-skills Courses, and Volunteering

Opportunities to learn about the world of work and about the range of career possibilities that exist, and to develop skills related to employment can help young people as they make choices regarding the pursuit of further education and training or entering the labour market directly from high school. As noted in Chapter 3, some young people gain exposure to the world of work through part-time employment while in high school. Other opportunities are presented through formal courses that are offered as part of the high school curriculum.

Individuals were asked whether they had taken any classes while in high school in career planning (which could include instruction on how to search for a job, write a resumé or prepare for an interview). They were also asked whether they had taken any special courses to gain work experience or job skills, for example, apprenticeship or co-op courses. In addition, the Youth in Transition Survey collected detailed information on any experience they may have had with volunteering in 1999 and whether volunteering had helped them to develop new skills that they could apply to a job.

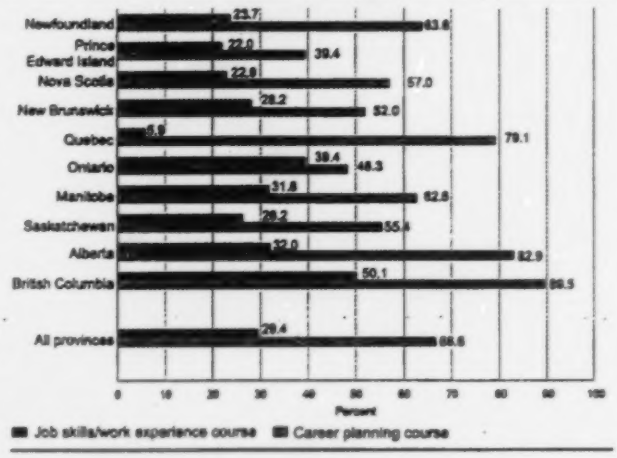
Career Planning and Job-skills Courses

Overall, about two-thirds of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school as of December 1999 reported that they had taken a course in career planning while in high school. Those least likely to have done so were high school dropouts, among whom just over half had taken such a career-planning course.

Participation in job-skills courses was much lower overall, with about 30% of youth reporting having taken such a course. This percentage, at 41.2%, was highest for high school graduates who were not in post-secondary education at the time of the survey. It fell to 30.1% in the case of PSE graduates, 27.2% for high school dropouts with no PSE, 24.2% of PSE continuers, and 23.9% of PSE leavers. Rates of participation in both career-planning and job-skills courses were very similar for males and females.

FIGURE 4.3

Percentage of 18-20-Year-olds Who Had Taken Career Planning or Job-skills Courses in High School



Participation in career-planning and job-skills courses varied across provinces – Figure 4.3. In Prince Edward Island, only 39.4% of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school reported having taken a career-planning course while in high school; in contrast, participation in such courses was highest in British Columbia (89.5%), Alberta (82.9%) and Quebec (79.1%). At 50.1%, British Columbia also ranked first in the percentage of youth who had taken a job-skills course in high school, though the rate was relatively high in Ontario, at about 40%. This percentage was lowest in Quebec (5.9%).

Volunteering

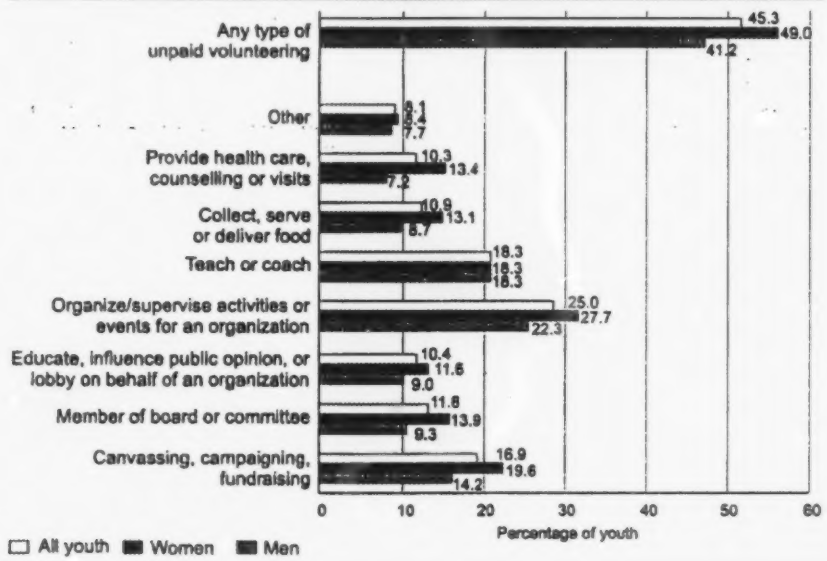
Volunteering is another way in which young people can gain experience and develop new skills in a work setting. Evidence from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) shows that youth aged 15-24 years and individuals aged 25-34 years were more likely than older individuals to report gaining a range of skills through their volunteer activities, including interpersonal skills, communication skills, increased knowledge, and organizational and managerial skills.[2] And while the NSGVP found that the percentage of individuals reporting that their volunteer activity had helped them gain skills they could apply to their jobs decreased between 1987 and 1997, it also found that this decrease was significantly smaller for youth aged 15-24 years.

Data collected through YITS finds that the overall volunteer rate was higher for young women (49.0%) than for young men (41.2%) – Figure 4.4.[3] The most common type of volunteer activity for both young men and young women was "organizing or supervising activities or events for an organization." "Canvassing, campaigning or fundraising" (females) and "teaching or coaching" (both sexes) also attracted relatively higher rates of participation than did other types of volunteer activity.

The rate of volunteering was highest among PSE continuers (50.4%) and high school graduates who were not in a post-secondary program (49.0%). Only about one-quarter of high school dropouts with no PSE reported having participated in unpaid volunteer activities in 1999.

FIGURE 4.4

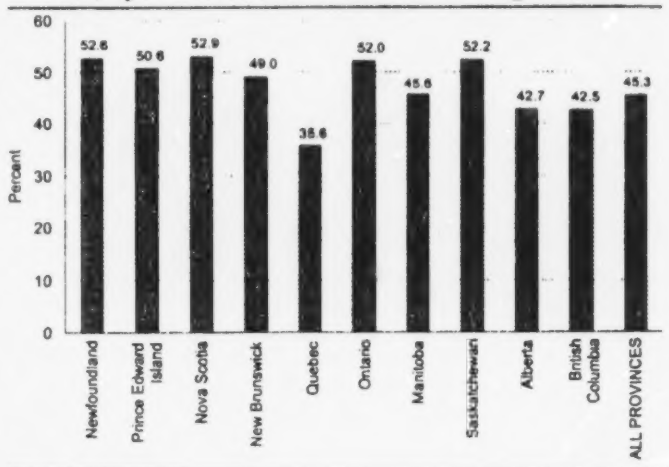
Participation in Unpaid Volunteer Activities in 1999, by Gender



Volunteer rates varied by province – Figure 4.5. In the four Atlantic provinces and in Ontario and Saskatchewan, about half of the 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school reported that they had volunteered in 1999; the volunteer rate for this group was lowest in Quebec (35.6%).

FIGURE 4.5

Percentage of Youth Reporting Any Volunteering in 1999, by Province Where Was Last in High School



Volunteering and Job Skills

People volunteer for many reasons, mainly because they believe strongly in the cause to which they are contributing. But many also volunteer because they believe they can gain skills that will help them get a job, and others, because they are required to do so by their school, their employer or the government. Overall, 11.2% of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school and who had volunteered in 1999 reported that volunteering had been a requirement for graduation from a school program – Table 4.5.

The percentage reporting volunteering as a school requirement ranged from 17.4% in British Columbia to 6.0% in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia and 5.2% in Quebec.

Views on whether volunteering was a positive experience in terms of providing new skills that could be applied to a job or business

TABLE 4.5

Volunteering – Did it Help Develop Skills and Help You Get a Job? (Percent)

	Volunteering was required for graduation from school program	Volunteering provided new skills can apply to a job or business		Volunteer activities have helped get a job
		Very little/ not at all	A fair amount/ a lot	
Newfoundland	6.0*	47.0	53.0	34.7
Prince Edward Island	9.2*	44.3	55.7	36.3
Nova Scotia	6.0	38.8	61.2	38.2
New Brunswick	9.3*	38.9	61.1	32.9
Quebec	5.2	44.7	55.3	24.7
Ontario	13.5	41.0	59.0	35.5
Manitoba	10.5	45.2	54.8	35.7
Saskatchewan	12.3	50.0	50.0	31.4
Alberta	9.9	42.2	57.8	36.1
British Columbia	17.4	39.7	60.3	35.7
All provinces	*11.2*	*42.3*	*57.7*	*33.2*

were mixed. In some provinces – Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and British Columbia – over 60% of those who had volunteered felt that that experience had helped them develop new job skills "a fair amount or a lot;" however, only about half of those in Saskatchewan and slightly more than half in Newfoundland regarded their volunteer experience as having been positive in this regard. About one-third of those who had volunteered reported that their volunteer experience had helped them get a job; this percentage ranged between 38.2% in Nova Scotia and 24.7% in Quebec.

4.4 Labour Market Participation after High School

For some, the end of high school marks the completion of one phase of their education and the beginning of further education at the post-secondary level. For others, however, it marks the point at which they become full labour market participants. Overall, about 32.4% of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school were working full-time in December 1999, 41.3% were working part-time, and about one-quarter did not have a job.

The percentage of youth who were working varied by education status – Figure 4.6. As would be expected, PSE continuers (i.e., students) were much less likely than the other groups to have had a job in December 1999 or, if they did have a job, they were more likely to be working part-time; the rate of part-time employment for this group was 53.8%. The remaining groups consisted of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in school either at the high school or the post-secondary level in December 1999. A key issue concerning these individuals is their employment status. Did they have jobs? Were these jobs part-time or full-time? And did employment status reflect educational attainment?

FIGURE 4.6

Employment Status of Youth Who Were No Longer in High School in December 1999

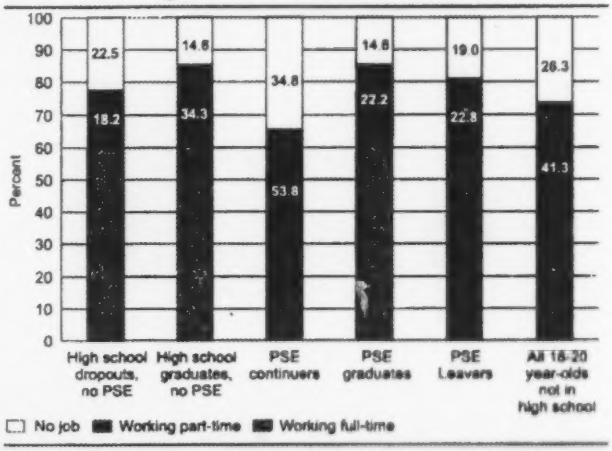


TABLE 4.6

After High School – Employment Status by Gender, December 1999 (Percent)

	Working Full-time		Working part-time		No Job	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
High school dropouts, no PSE	64.6	49.7	12.1	29.2	23.3	21.1
High school graduates, no PSE	58.2	42.5	26.8	43.3	15.0	14.2
PSE continuers	13.8	9.4	47.8	58.6	38.4	32.0
PSE graduates	66.6	60.5	11.7*	30.1	21.7	9.3
PSE leavers	64.4	50.9	18.7	27.5	16.9	21.5*
All 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school	***39.5***	***25.4***	***33.2***	***49.5***	***27.3***	***25.2***

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The jobless rate was highest for high school dropouts with no post-secondary education. Though more often employed than dropouts, many of the high school graduates with no PSE held part-time jobs. The rate of full-time employment was highest for post-secondary graduates.

The rate of full-time employment was highest for young people who had completed a program at the post-secondary level (63.1%); only 14.6% of post-secondary graduates did not have a job at the time of the survey. The jobless rate[4] was also low for high school graduates with no PSE (14.6%). However, only slightly more than one-half of them were working full-time in December 1999, while about one-third worked part-time. While a slightly higher percentage of post-secondary leavers than high school graduates with no PSE were jobless, their rate of full-time employment was higher (58.2%). The picture for high school dropouts with no PSE was more mixed. While 59.3% of them reported working full time in December 1999, a higher percentage of this group compared to the others who were no longer in either high school or PSE reported that they did not have a job (22.5%).

There are some notable differences in employment status when male 18-20-year-olds are compared to females – Table 4.6. Among post-secondary continuers, a higher proportion of males did not have a job in December 1999 (38.4%) compared to females (32.0%). Female post-secondary students, on the other hand, were much more likely than males to be working part time (58.6% of females compared to 47.8% of males). Among the remaining groups, higher percentages of males than females worked full time in December 1999, though the difference was smaller in the case of post-secondary graduates. With respect to having no job, the gap between males and females was highest in the case of post-secondary graduates – 21.7% of males in this group were jobless compared to only 9.3% of females. And while the jobless rate was relatively low for both male and female high school graduates with no PSE, relatively high percentages were working part time; this rate was especially high in the case of females, at 43.3%.

4.5 Post-secondary Participation: A Preliminary Picture

This section describes 18-20-year-olds who had gone on to further studies at the post-secondary level, focussing on their experiences during their first year of post-secondary studies. In addition to simply allowing us to draw a picture of how youth are faring as they move to the post-secondary level, it also allows us to compare the attitudes and sense of belonging of those who dropped out of PSE with PSE continuers and PSE graduates.

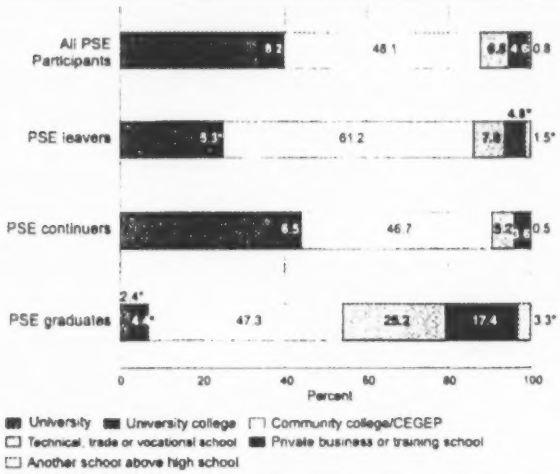
Post-secondary Participation by Type of Institution

Considered as a whole, close to half of the post-secondary participants reported attending a community college or CEGEP, one-third attended university, and the balance attended a range of other post-secondary institutions such as a technical, trade or vocational school, a university college, or a private business or training school.

There were large differences according to post-secondary status, however – Figure 4.7. Not surprising, given their age, very few of those who had completed a program at the post-secondary level (PSE graduates) reported having attended a university. The largest percentage of PSE graduates (47.3%) had completed a program at a community college or CEGEP;[5] one-quarter had completed a program at a technical, trade or vocational school; and 17.4% had completed a program at a private business or training school. Attending university was much more common

FIGURE 4.7

Type of Institution Attended, First Year of Post-secondary Education



among post-secondary continuers, accounting for about 37.5% of this group; 46.7% of PSE continuers were attending a community college or CEGEP. The majority of post-secondary leavers, on the other hand, had been enroled at a community college or CEGEP (61.2%).

Living Arrangements in First Year of PSE

Living arrangements during the first year of post-secondary education varied a great deal according to the type of institution attended. Living in an on-campus residence was most common among university students - 41.4% of those who attended university in their first year of PSE reported that they had lived in residence; 43.4% lived with their parents. Living with their parents was much more common among students at all other types of post-secondary institution. It is interesting to note that while living off campus with friends or living alone were much less common overall, the percentages reporting these kinds of living arrangements were higher for students who attended institutions such as technical, trade or vocational schools or private business schools.

The much higher percentage of university students who lived in residence would reflect in part the fact that often, other types of PSE institutions tend not to have this option available to students. But it also raises the question of whether university students are more likely than other types of students to move away from home in order to attend school. Future research using data from the YITS will allow analysts to explore questions around post-secondary participation and geographic mobility.

University students were more likely than students at other types of post-secondary institution to live in residence on campus during their first year of PSE. Living with their parents was much more common among students at all other types of post-secondary institution.

Sources of Funding for PSE

Students reported a wide range of sources of funding for their post-secondary studies. But there were some differences in these sources when post-secondary graduates, continuers and leavers were compared - Table 4.7. For all three groups, the most common source of funding for PSE was earnings from employment since leaving high school. However, a much higher percentage of PSE continuers reported receiving money from their parents or partner (65.3%) than was the case for either PSE graduates (50%) or PSE leavers (52.4%). One-third of continuers reported receiving money from scholarships, awards or prizes, compared to only 20.6% of PSE graduates and 18.6% of PSE leavers. And a higher percentage of continuers used personal savings as another source of funds. Close to 30% of PSE continuers and 35% of PSE graduates

TABLE 4.7

Sources of Funding for Post-Secondary Education (Percent)

	Post-secondary status			
	PSE Graduates	PSE Continuers	PSE Leavers	All youth with PSE experience
Received money from parents/ partner that you do not have to pay back	50.0	65.3	52.4	63.1
Received money from other people that you do not have to pay back	5.1*	9.3	7.9*	8.9
Money from jobs since leaving high school	54.5	67.8	62.8	66.4
Government sponsored student loan	35.0	29.2	26.7	29.4
Bank loan	7.7	7.0	7.2	7.1
Loan from parents/family	2.8	3.1	2.2*	3.0
Personal savings	41.4	50.7	42.6	49.3
Scholarships, awards, prizes	20.6	33.2	18.6	31.0
Grants, bursaries	12.4	14.6	9.3	14.0

had received a government-sponsored student loan; this percentage was 26.7% in the case of PSE leavers.

The most common source of funding for PSE was earnings from employment since leaving high school. But PSE continuers were more likely than graduates or leavers to receive money from a range of other sources as well, including parents or partners, scholarships, awards or prizes, and personal savings.

Attitudes, Sense of Belonging

A key set of issues surrounding the transition from high school to post-secondary studies concerns how well youth adapt to their new environment. What are their attitudes and sense of belonging? Do they feel they fit, academically and socially? Are they able to keep up with the work and do they feel they made the right choice in terms of type of institution and program of study? And how do attitudes and sense of belonging relate to the decision to continue at the post-secondary level or to leave before completing their program?

YITS asked individuals to report on a wide range of attitudinal and behavioral dimensions. There were only relatively small differences in the responses of young men compared to young women - Appendix Table 4.3. Differences were much more marked, however, when PSE graduates and continuers were compared to PSE leavers - Table 4.8.

The most positive responses were related to personal attitudes and relationships: the vast majority of continuers, graduates and leavers felt they had the skills and abilities to do well and reported that they had become friends with other students during first year. And 81.5% reported that there were people at school they could talk to about personal things, though PSE leavers scored lower on this dimension. Only a

small percentage (15.0%) reported that they had trouble most or all of the time in keeping up with the workload, though again this percentage was higher for PSE leavers (24.4%). And while 83.7% of continuers reported that they never or rarely missed deadlines, this fell to 63.6% of leavers.

On other dimensions, the differences between continuers, graduates and leavers were larger, indicating a higher degree of disaffection on the part of those who left before completing their PSE program. For example, while 87% of PSE graduates and 74.3% of PSE participants felt they had found the right program for them, this fell to only 40.1% of leavers. Only about half of the leavers felt that their first year had given them skills that would help them in the job market and only about 40% were sure of the type of work they would like to have in the future. A relatively higher percentage of leavers also reported that they could never or rarely relate what was being taught to their future and that they 'felt like a number' most or all of the time. Leavers were more likely to skip classes once a week or more (35.2%) compared to 22.9% of continuers and 9.7% of PSE graduates. And while 82.3% of PSE graduates and 74.6% of PSE continuers never

TABLE 4.8

Attitudes, Sense of Belonging, First Year of Post-secondary Education (Percent)

	Post-secondary status			
	PSE Graduates	PSE Continuers	PSE Leavers	All youth with PSE experience
I participated in a program or workshop to help me adjust to first-year PSE.	11.2	15.5	12.7	14.9
I had trouble keeping up with the workload most or all of the time.	4.4*	14.9	24.4	15.0
I never or rarely missed deadlines.	90.1	83.7	63.6	82.3
I could never or rarely relate what was being taught to my future.	13.3	23.6	38.9	24.3
I felt like just a number most or all of the time.	11.5	24.2	38.6	24.6
I skipped class once a week or more.	9.7*	22.9	35.2	23.1
I never thought about dropping out.	82.3	74.6	38.7	71.9
I felt that I had the skills and abilities to do well. (Agree/strongly agree)	95.4	89.0	83.2	88.9
There were people at school I could talk to about personal things. (Agree/strongly agree)	84.1	82.5	70.4	81.5
I felt I had found the right program for me. (Agree/strongly agree)	87.0	74.3	40.1	72.0
First year helped me get a better idea of my future plans. (Agree/strongly agree)	85.9	79.9	64.8	78.9
First year gave me skills that would help me in the job market. (Agree/strongly agree)	84.5	69.6	46.9	68.5
During first year, I was sure of the type of work I would like to have in the future. (Agree/strongly agree)	71.7	59.7	39.7	58.7
During first year, I became friends with other students at school. (Agree/strongly agree)	91.1	90.6	82.5	89.9

thought about dropping out, this was the case for only 38.7% of leavers.

Overall, then, the transition to PSE was generally a fairly positive experience for the majority of those continuing their PSE studies and for those who had completed a program at the PSE level. This was not the case for leavers, however. While they remained confident in their skills and abilities and fit in socially, making friends and establishing personal relationships, they were much less satisfied in terms of their "fit" academically. They were unsure of what they wanted to do, were unhappy with their program and this was reflected in counter-productive behaviors like skipping classes and thinking about dropping out.

While PSE leavers represent only about 9% of PSE students, they are of concern for a number of reasons. First, the fact that many of them do not feel they fit well suggests that they may not have selected either the right kind of institution for them or the right program. Information and assistance that help to avoid these mistakes could help such students to stay in school, saving them and the institutions time and money. Second, in this cycle of the YITS, students are still only 18-20 years old. Some may drop out of post-secondary education in subsequent years, without completing their program, and some who had dropped out may later return, perhaps to a different institution or in a different program. Later cycles of the YITS will re-survey these same students, identifying those who, over the longer run, continue, graduate or leave PSE without completing their program.

PSE leavers were much less satisfied than continuers or graduates regarding their academic "fit" during their first year of PSE.

4.6 Barriers to Post-secondary Education

The question of barriers to post-secondary education is a policy concern. How widespread are these barriers and to what extent does the existence of these barriers prevent individuals from pursuing as much post-secondary education as they would like to have?

Table 4.9 shows the percentage of all 18-20-year-olds (including those still in high school) who reported facing barriers to going as far in school as they would like. Overall, 45.9% reported that they were facing such barriers. The percentage was highest for high school dropouts with no PSE (60.7%). About half of both high school graduates with no PSE and PSE leavers reported facing barriers to post-secondary education. The percentage of PSE continuers reporting facing barriers was 40.6%.

The most common barrier was financial – about two-thirds of those reporting facing barriers to going as far in school as they would like cited financial barriers (individuals were allowed to cite up to three barriers). The percentages citing financial barriers were similar for post-secondary leavers (71.4%), high school graduates with no PSE (70.7%), post-secondary graduates (70.4%), and post-secondary continuers (68.9%).

Slightly less than half of 18-20-year-olds reported facing barriers to going as far in school as they would like. The most common barrier reported was financial.

While financial barriers were also cited by over half of high school continuers and high school dropouts, these two groups faced a number of other barriers as well. Close to 20% of high school continuers reported that they expected to be unable to get into the post-secondary program they wanted and/or that their marks would be too low and 12.3% reported "not having enough interest/

TABLE 4.9

Barriers to Post-Secondary Education (Percent)

	High School Dropouts, no PSE	High School Continuers	High School Graduates, no PSE	PSE Continuers	PSE Graduates	PSE Leavers	All
(Percentage of 18-20-year-olds)	(10.4)	(13.0)	(22.7)	(45.3)	(3.7)	(4.9)	(100)
Percentage reporting facing barriers to "going as far in school as would like to"	60.7	42.6	51.3	40.6	42.9	49.7	45.9
Financial situation	53.1	56.6	70.7	68.9	70.4	71.4	65.9
Not able to get into program/marks too low/not accepted	9.4	19.5	12.8	9.9	7.1*	8.6*	11.6
Not enough interest/ motivation	11.5	12.3	6.8	12.2	7.4*	10.0*	10.5
Want to stay close to home	1.3*	1.0*	1.7*	1.3*	1.5**	2.0**	1.4
Takes too long	5.6*	3.3*	5.3*	8.9	5.0*	4.0*	6.5
Want to work	15.4	3.9*	4.8	4.2	6.0*	4.9*	5.9
Caring for own children	16.2	5.3*	3.4	1.6*	3.4**	2.8*	4.6
Own health	1.9*	1.9*	1.5*	0.8*	0.6**	1.8**	1.3
Not sure what I want to do	2.5*	2.6*	5.8	2.2*	5.8**	4.0**	3.4
Other	14.2	14.3	9.6	10.9	9.7*	12.1*	11.5

Note: Individuals were allowed to cite up to three barriers to going as far in school as they would like to.

motivation." High school dropouts with no PSE were more likely than any other group to cite "wanting to work" and "caring for their own children" as other barriers to not going as far in school as they would like.

Experience with Government-sponsored Student Loans

Overall, very few high school dropouts with no PSE, high school continuers, or high school graduates with no PSE reported that they had ever applied for a government-sponsored student loan. These percentages were much higher for post-secondary participants, however. About 36% of both post-secondary continuers and post-secondary leavers reported that they had ever applied for a government-sponsored student loan; this percentage rose slightly to 41% of PSE graduates.

Of those who had ever applied for such a loan, 19% of PSE continuers reported that they had been rejected at least once; the corresponding figure for PSE leavers was 16% and for PSE graduates, 13.4 %.

4.7 Summary

Young people follow a variety of educational and labour market pathways once they are no longer in high school. The Youth in Transition Survey provides detailed information describing these pathways. As of December 1999, the post-secondary education participation rate was higher for females than for males. That means of course that more males than females entered the labour market directly from high school -

either as high school graduates or as high school dropouts.

Based on their own assessments, individuals with no post-secondary education, especially high school dropouts, were more likely to perceive their skills to be weak on a number of dimensions. Further, dropouts tended to miss out on courses in high school that would provide them with opportunities to learn about the world of work and about career possibilities, and to develop skills they could apply to a job.

Labour market participation patterns also reflected education status. The jobless rate was highest for high school dropouts with no post-secondary education. Though more often employed than dropouts, many of the high school graduates with no PSE held part-time jobs. The rate of full-time employment was highest for 18-20-year-olds who had already graduated from a post-secondary program.

The Youth in Transition Survey also allows a detailed look at the characteristics and experiences of post-secondary participants during their first year of post-secondary studies. A comparison of post-secondary continuers and leavers shows that there were some differences between the two groups. For example, continuers were more positive than leavers regarding their 'fit' academically. Also, PSE continuers generally had financial support from a wider variety of sources, than did leavers.

Among all 18-20-year-olds, the percentages reporting facing barriers to going as far in school as they would like to were higher for those who did not go on to post-secondary education and for post-secondary leavers. Frequently, those barriers were financial in nature.

Notes

1 After completing 11 years of elementary-secondary schooling, Quebec students must obtain a diploma from a CEGEP (collège d'enseignement général et professionel) in order to continue to the university level. CEGEPs offer both a general program that leads to university admission and vocational programs that prepare students for the labour force.

2 Ekos Research Associates and Canadian Policy Research Networks (1999). *Analysis of Volunteering: Results from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating.* R-99-11E.a., Research Paper Series, Applied Research Branch, Human Resources Development Canada.

3 Recent results from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGV&P) indicate that about 29% of 15-24-year-olds reported contributing as an unpaid volunteer over the reference period covered by that survey (October 1999-September 2000). The Youth in Transition Survey includes young adults aged 18-20 years. Results from YITS indicate that the rate of unpaid volunteering is substantially higher for the 18-20-year-old sub-group (45.6%) in 1999. For more details on the 2000 NSGV&P, see *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (2001). Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 71-542-XIE.

4 For the purposes of this analysis, the term "jobless" refers to both those who were unemployed and those not in the labour force.

5 Community colleges and CEGEPs offer a range of programs that lead to diplomas or certificates in a variety of career, technical and apprenticeship fields. These programs vary in length — some are a few weeks in duration, while others take some years to complete. Many college programs are one to two years in duration. Enrolment in trade-vocational programs or other programs geared toward preparation for employment in an occupation or trade generally does not require graduation from high school.

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APPENDIX TABLE 4.1

After High School – Education Status of 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School as of December 1999, by Gender and Province (Percent) [a]

	High School Dropouts, no PSE	High School Graduates, no PSE	Post-secondary Continuers	Post-secondary Graduates	Post-secondary Leavers	Total
Newfoundland						
Men	14.0*	23.7	47.0	4.0*	11.3	100.0
Women	5.2*	23.5	61.8	4.1*	5.4*	100.0
Both sexes	9.7	23.6	54.3	4.0*	8.4*	100.0
Prince Edward Island						
Men	15.2*	27.0	44.2	8.2*	5.4**	100.0
Women	8.1*	25.0	58.2	5.9**	2.8**	100.0
Both sexes	11.7*	26.0	51.2	7.0*	4.1*	100.0
Nova Scotia						
Men	15.9	23.3	49.9	4.4*	6.5*	100.0
Women	6.1*	14.0	65.6	5.7*	8.6*	100.0
Both sexes	11.0	18.6	57.8	5.0	7.6	100.0
New Brunswick						
Men	11.4	35.8	41.5	4.9*	6.4*	100.0
Women	6.3*	21.6	58.5	9.8*	3.8*	100.0
Both sexes	8.8	28.6	50.1	7.4*	5.1	100.0
Quebec						
Men	18.7	9.6	55.4	7.5	8.6	100.0
Women	9.8	5.6	69.2	7.7	7.7	100.0
Both sexes	14.3	7.6	62.3	7.6	8.2	100.0
Ontario						
Men	11.5	38.3	44.6	0.9*	4.7	100.0
Women	8.8	31.8	52.7	3.0	3.7	100.0
Both sexes	10.1	35.0	48.7	2.0	4.2	100.0
Manitoba						
Men	16.4	33.2	39.0	4.5*	6.9*	100.0
Women	14.2	25.9	49.5	5.2*	5.2*	100.0
Both sexes	15.3	29.4	44.4	4.9	6.0	100.0
Saskatchewan						
Men	10.5	37.5	40.4	4.1*	7.5*	100.0
Women	5.4*	31.6	52.5	5.2	5.3*	100.0
Both sexes	8.0	34.5	46.4	4.7	6.4	100.0
Alberta						
Men	17.5	35.5	39.3	3.0**	4.7*	100.0
Women	12.3	33.7	44.9	4.1*	5.0*	100.0
Both sexes	14.9	34.6	42.1	3.5*	4.9	100.0
British Columbia						
Men	14.5	33.2	45.2	3.1	4.0*	100.0
Women	8.0	28.1	55.7	3.8*	4.4*	100.0
Both sexes	11.2	30.6	50.5	3.5*	4.2	100.0

a For the purposes of this analysis, province refers to the location where the individual was last in high school.

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APPENDIX TABLE 4.2

Self-assessment of Skills, 18-20-Year-olds Who Were No Longer in High School, by Province (Percent)

	Nfld.	P.E.I.	N.S.	N.B.	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.	Alta.	B.C.	All Prov.
1. Writing skills											
Poor/fair	16.5	10.8	12.2	14.1	13.4	13.3	17.0	17.9	13.6	15.8	14.1
Very good/ excellent	40.6	44.7	51.5	45.2	49.7	48.8	44.0	36.6	46.0	41.6	47.1
2. Reading skills											
Poor/fair	11.1*	6.1*	7.3	8.2	6.8	7.2	7.2	10.3	9.3	10.8	8.0
Very good/ excellent	54.9	55.3	64.5	58.0	61.1	60.3	58.0	48.2	56.1	53.3	58.5
3. Communication skills											
Poor/fair	21.1	12.0	11.0	11.6	13.6	11.7	19.5	19.4	12.8	14.7	13.5
Very good/ excellent	42.4	42.6	52.7	51.1	50.1	51.6	42.8	36.6	45.7	44.9	48.6
4. Problem-solving skills											
Poor/fair	16.7	10.4*	10.2	12.1	9.5	10.1	13.5	12.9	10.9	13.0	10.9
Very good/ excellent	33.7	37.6	44.4	42.0	48.3	43.8	40.6	35.3	41.3	35.9	42.9
5. Math skills											
Poor/fair	31.5	26.3	27.2	28.3	28.5	31.2	28.5	35.8	31.5	39.6	31.4
Very good/ excellent	32.2	27.9	36.7	34.1	38.9	31.8	34.5	30.1	30.4	24.0	32.8
6. Computer skills											
Poor/fair	33.7	27.6	26.4	27.6	34.3	25.3	30.1	33.6	29.1	29.8	29.4
Very good/ excellent	35.2	32.5	41.0	37.9	34.9	38.6	34.3	29.4	37.3	34.2	36.4

APPENDIX TABLE 4.3

Attitudes, Sense of Belonging, First Year of Post-secondary Education, by Gender (Percent)

	Men	Women	All youth with post-secondary experience
I participated in a program or workshop to help me adjust to first-year PSE.	15.4	14.6	14.9
I had trouble keeping up with the workload most or all of the time.	14.3	15.6	15.0
I never or rarely missed deadlines.	78.1	85.8	82.3
I never or rarely could relate what was being taught to my future.	23.4	25.1	24.3
I felt like just a number most or all of the time.	26.0	23.4	24.6
I skipped class once a week or more.	28.0	19.0	23.1
I never thought about dropping out.	74.8	69.5	71.9
I felt I had the skills and abilities to do well. (Agree/strongly agree)	90.5	87.5	88.9
There were people at school I could talk to about personal things. (Agree/strongly agree)	80.4	82.4	81.5
I felt I had found the right program for me. (Agree/strongly agree)	74.7	69.8	72.0
First year helped me get a better idea of my future plans. (Agree/strongly agree)	79.3	78.6	78.9
First year gave me skills that would help me in the job market (Agree/strongly agree)	68.8	68.4	68.6
During first year, I was sure of the type of work I would like to have in the future. (Agree/strongly agree)	60.4	57.3	58.7
During first year, I became friends with other students at school. (Agree/strongly agree)	91.5	88.5	89.9

Chapter 5

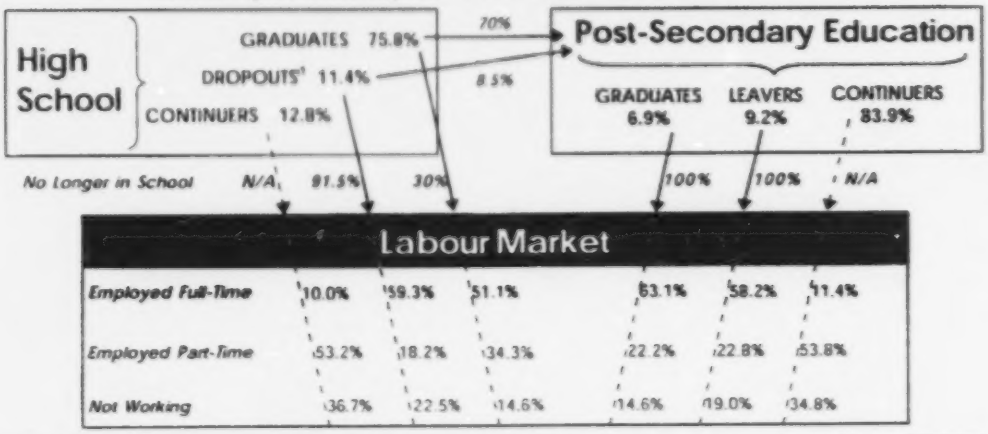
CONCLUSION

This report describes results for 18-20-year-olds from the first survey cycle of the Canadian Longitudinal Youth in Transition Survey. The transition to the labour market and full adulthood presents youth in today's knowledge-based society with both opportunities and challenges. A key challenge is to ensure that the educational and labour market choices that youth make will enable them to participate fully in the economy and the society of the 21st century. Young people are expected to complete not only high school but increasingly, post-secondary programs or other specialized training in order to attain sufficient skills and knowledge to effectively participate in the labour market.

Youth at 18 to 20 years of age are at an important crossroads in life. Many choose to complete high school and continue on to post-secondary education. Others are in the final stages of completing their secondary schooling, while some have dropped out of the school system. Still others decide to join the labour market full time, or to combine work and school. The Youth in Transition Survey focuses on documenting the education and labour market experiences of youth. A summary of results from Chapters 2 to 4 on the key pathways of 18-20-year-olds is presented in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5

Summary of Pathways of 18-20-Year-olds, December 1999



a. This figure presents estimates for 18-20-year-olds, excluding the high school dropout rate (11.4%). This rate differs from the 20-year-old dropout rate reported in Chapter 2 (12%). The latter is preferable as it accounts for the fact that some youth complete high school at a later age. Yet, for the purpose of presenting reliable estimates for all education and labour market pathways, it is necessary to present 18-20-year-old results here.

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Dropping Out of High School

A comparison of the YITS results with those reported for the 1991 School Leavers Survey shows that positive gains have been made over the past decade in terms of the educational attainment among Canada's youth. As of December 1999, the high school dropout rate for 20-year-olds had fallen from 18% to 12%, a one-third reduction. Gains were made in all provinces, with notable reductions especially taking place in the Atlantic provinces and in Saskatchewan. The declines reflect a growing societal recognition of the fundamental importance of formal education today. This recognition may, in part, be attributed to the efforts of governments and educators to encourage young people to stay in school.

Despite the overall gains, dropout rates remained higher for young men than for young women: about a 6-percentage point gap occurs at the national level and even larger variations exist in some provinces. Some of the reasons for the difference are suggested – males achieved lower academic grades, they showed less interest in high school, and some were drawn to leave school for work.

Dropouts and graduates differed in various ways. Graduates were more likely to have lived with both parents during high school, to have had at least one post-secondary-educated parent, and to have had parents who worked in management, science or other professional occupations. Relative to graduates, more dropouts had low school grades and were less engaged in the academic and social aspects of school. Indeed, most dropouts indicated that they left high school because of school-related reasons. Combining periods of work and school does not appear to be associated with failure to complete high school, unless individuals were working the equivalent of full-time weekly hours. In fact, *not* working while attending high school was more likely to be associated with dropping out – perhaps suggesting that formal learning may be enhanced by external, non-school experiences.

Not all dropouts displayed characteristics that suggest they were at risk of failing to complete high school. A sizable percentage of dropouts did not have low grades in their final year of high school. The majority of dropouts lived in two-parent families, and most had parents who had at least graduated from high school. Only a fraction of them were living common law, were married, or had children. Dropouts are a heterogeneous population and leave for a variety of reasons. Further untangling of the catalysts for dropping out will be the subject of subsequent analyses of the YITS data.

Dropping out may only represent a temporary state for a number of youth. Some dropouts find ways to pursue "second chance" educational opportunities outside of high school, including post-secondary education. And almost all the dropouts indicated that they aspired to complete at least a high school education some day. Future YITS cycles will provide more information on how many in fact do so.

Pathways After High School

The post-secondary participation rate stood at slightly more than 60% of 18-20-year-olds who were no longer in high school, as of December 1999. Alternatively, about 40% had attained only high school graduation or less. Some students of course drop out of post-secondary education, thus reducing the expected percentage of youth who will graduate with post-secondary credentials. On the other hand, high school graduates not in post-secondary education at the time of the survey may later enter into post-secondary education. Individuals going on to post-secondary education tended to come from two-parent families and had at least one parent who had completed post-secondary education.

Educational attainment was related to other characteristics of 18-20-year-olds. For example, more positive self-assessments of skills were provided by those who had participated in post-secondary education. Post-secondary continuers and post-secondary leavers more often rated their skills as being very good or excellent, while high school dropouts (with no post-secondary education) more often rated their skills as poor or fair. Those with the weakest self-rated skills were the ones who became full labour market participants directly from high school.

Labour market participation patterns varied by education status. As shown in Figure 5, high school dropouts were more likely to be without a job in December 1999, relative to other youth not in school. High school graduates (with no post-secondary education) were more likely to be employed, yet their rate of part-time employment was higher compared to other youth not in school. Post-secondary graduates were least likely to be without a job and most likely to be working full-time at the end of 1999.

The Youth in Transition Survey provides information on the experiences of youth who leave their post-secondary programs before completing them. Post-secondary leavers regarded their first year of post-secondary studies less positively than did continuers, and were generally much less satisfied with their 'fit' academically. And while employment earnings constituted an important source of funding for all post-secondary participants, leavers reported receiving funding from fewer sources. Given that this YITS cohort is relatively young at 18-20 years of age, the percentage who fall into the post-secondary leaver group is still relatively small. Future cycles of the YITS can be relied on to provide more information on these leavers. For example, it will be important to monitor the percentage, and types, of leavers as youth move through the post-secondary system, and to examine whether or not leaving school is temporary or permanent.

From a policy standpoint, it is important to understand the factors that prevent youth from completing more education. Findings show that close to two-thirds of 18-20-year-olds reported facing barriers to going as far in school as they would like. The percentages citing financial barriers were similar for post-secondary leavers, high school graduates with no PSE, PSE graduates and PSE continuers. It will be important to conduct additional analysis of the factors that might reduce educational barriers and assist youth in reaching their learning potential.

This report has presented a first look at results on youth 18-20 years of age from the Youth in Transition Survey. Future research will use multivariate analysis to further explore the relationships underlying the patterns that were observed in the YITS data. The informative value of the YITS will increase with subsequent survey cycles that will allow researchers to track these youth over time. The longitudinal aspect of the survey will provide the opportunity to determine which characteristics help individuals to make a successful transition to the labour market and full adulthood. In time, the longer-term consequences of the decisions made by these youth will become more evident.

Appendix A

YITS 18-20-YEAR-OLD SURVEY METHODOLOGY

A.1 Introduction

This appendix provides information on the survey methodology employed for the 18-20 cohort of the Youth in Transition Survey (YITS). The focus here is on the sample design and data quality as opposed to the data collection or processing steps. More detailed information on all of these aspects is included as part of the user documentation accompanying the microdata file.

A.2 Sample design

Sample frame

The YITS target population for the 18-20 cohort comprises residents of the ten provinces of Canada who were born in the calendar years 1979 to 1981. A large portion of the questionnaire for Cycle 1, which was administered from January to April 2000, is devoted to profiling these individuals' education and labour market activities during the reference year of 1999, when they were 18 to 20 years old.

Given the important differences among the educational systems in Canada, the YITS 18-20 survey sought to generate estimates at the province level. For example, from the inception of YITS, there was a clear desire for province-level estimates of high-school dropout rates among 20-year-old men and women and more generally, for estimates of proportions of at-risk groups by province. The study was also designed to support analysis of characteristics of at-risk groups at a regional level over possibly three cycles of a longitudinal panel. Interest in such characteristics influenced the data quality targets specified at the outset of work on the sample design. In concrete terms the objectives were:

1) a coefficient of variation (CV) less than or equal to 16.5% for Cycle 1 province-level high-school dropout rates among 20-year-olds by sex, and

2) at Cycle 3, for a characteristic found in a proportion of at least 20% of high school dropouts, a CV less than or equal to 16.5% for that proportion at a regional level.

With some initial work on a sample design, it became apparent that these CV levels would be extremely difficult to attain for many of the province-level dropout rates. First, there was the question of a suitable frame to survey this relatively rare and highly mobile target

population of 18-20-year-olds. Although this population comprises about 1.2 million individuals, they are found in fewer than one in ten households and have a one-year mobility rate of 22%.[1]

After carefully examining the merits of alternate options, the final choice of frame for the 18-20 cohort main survey was the Labour Force Survey (LFS).[2] The LFS exclusion of full-time members of the armed forces, inmates of institutions and residents of Indian reserves and Crown lands, which represent about 2% of the population of Canada, also applies to YITS.

Sampling

The initial YITS sample comprised a set of 36 household groups, each in itself a probability-based sample of the population. The households in this series of samples were in the LFS between January 1997 and December 1999. This restriction to the three-year period prior to the YITS data collection limited the YITS sample size, but it was important to recognise the potential risk of trying to trace the highly mobile target population in more dated LFS samples. The design required effective tracing and high response rates to control sampling error and potential bias in estimates for characteristics correlated with mobility.

From the initial sample of 29,950 households, 786 were eliminated from the YITS sample – for the majority this was due to participation in another longitudinal survey. The final stage of sampling for YITS was the selection of one household member in the YITS target population from each of 29,164 in-scope households. In the minority of households that had more than one person in the YITS target population, one was selected with equal-probability systematic sampling. In total, 23,592 persons participated in the survey, for an overall response rate of 80.9%. (See Table 1 for the sample distribution by province.)

Weighting

Because the sample for the YITS 18-20 cohort is derived from households that were in the LFS sample, part of the LFS weighting procedure is applicable to the YITS sample. More precisely, the LFS subweight, which is the design weight adjusted for LFS household nonresponse, is used as the initial weight for YITS sample units.

To reflect the YITS sample design and take into account the nonresponse for this survey, several adjustments must be applied to the LFS subweight to derive the YITS final weight. In total, five adjustments are required to compensate for:

1) including 36 groups from the LFS
2) a priori nonresponse at the household level
3) selecting one person per household
4) nonresponse of YITS selected persons
5) differences between post-censal demographic estimates and the weighted counts derived from the first four adjustments.

Variance estimation

Due to the complexity of the YITS sample design the bootstrap resampling technique, using a total of 1000 bootstrap samples, was chosen to calculate estimates of the variance. This technique is popular among surveys with a large number of strata and multiple primary sampling units per stratum.

The idea behind the bootstrap method is to select random subsamples from the full sample in such a way that each of the subsamples (or replicates) and the full sample follow the same design.[3] The final weights for units in each replicate are recalculated, following the weighting steps used for the full sample. These bootstrap weights are used to calculate a population estimate for each replicate. The variance among the replicate estimates for a given characteristic is an estimate of the sampling variance of the full-sample population estimate.

A.3 Data quality indicators

Response rates

Tables A.1 to A.3 present response rates for different subgroups of the sample. These rates are not weighted and use, as a base, the initial YITS sample count excluding a priori nonresponse households. In each of these 29,164 households, one person was selected and an attempt was made to contact and interview that person. The respondent count includes persons who were interviewed, persons contacted but confirmed to be outside the YITS target population by year of birth and persons whom a household contact confirmed as deceased. (The latter two groups are included in the respondent count because they provided all the information expected, given their special status.)

The province-level response rates in Table A.1 show considerable variation. There is also a definite pattern of higher response rates for sample units from more recent LFS groups – Table A.3. Between the two demographic characteristics age and sex, age seems to be a more influential factor, although the age-sex response rates (Table A.2) are more uniform than the province-level rates. All of these factors, among others, were examined for a possible role in the weighting adjustment steps.

TABLE A.1

Response Rates by Province of LFS Household

Province	Persons sampled	Respondents	Response rate (%)
Newfoundland	1,411	1,238	87.7
Prince Edward Island	780	652	83.6
Nova Scotia	1,826	1,523	83.4
New Brunswick	1,715	1,367	79.7
Quebec	5,881	4,644	79.0
Ontario	8,520	6,720	78.9
Manitoba	1,952	1,649	84.5
Saskatchewan	2,105	1,772	84.2
Alberta	2,380	1,942	81.6
British Columbia	2,594	2,085	80.4
All provinces	***29,164***	***23,592***	***80.9***

TABLE A.2

Response Rates by Sex and Age as of December 1999

	Response rate (%)		
Age	Men	Women	Both sexes
17-18	82.3	84.1	83.2
19	81.1	81.4	81.3
20-21	77.9	79.0	78.4
All ages	*80.4*	*81.4*	*80.9*

TABLE A.3

Response Rates by Date of LFS Household Data

Date of LFS household data	Number of groups	Response rate (%)
1997 January-June	6	78.2
1997 July-December	5	78.5
1998 January-June	5	78.1
1998 July-December	6	80.0
1999 April-July	4	82.4
1999 August	4	85.4
1999 December	6	85.6
All dates	*36*	*80.9*

Estimates of sampling error

Much of the work on the sample design for the 18-20 cohort of YITS focused on the desire to obtain reliable estimates of provincial high-school dropout rates for 20-year-old men and women, as well as adequate numbers of respondents to support regional analysis of young adults in at-risk groups. The following tables relate to these survey objectives.

In general, the estimated CVs are consistent with the range predicted by scenarios examined under the final sample design. However, a quick look at Tables A.4 to A.6 does indicate that analysis and interpretation of the YITS data should include statistical significance tests, and these must be based on variance estimates that take into account the survey design. Caution is required particularly for analysis of rare characteristics in a population subgroup and for any characteristics within small subgroups.

To reflect the need for caution in analysing YITS data a standard rating system based on CV estimates has been applied to all population estimates presented in this report. Estimated characteristics with a CV of 16.5% or less are considered of good quality and to these, no special notation has been applied. For CVs in the range of 16.6% to 33.3%, an asterisk (*) qualifies the corresponding characteristic estimate. Similarly, two asterisks (**) flag a characteristic estimate for which the CV exceeds 33.3%. This simple notation provides an objective rating of data quality throughout the report.

TABLE A.4

High School Dropout Rates Among 20-Year-olds (Percent)

	Men		Women	
Province	Estimate	CV	Estimate	CV
Newfoundland	15.2*	30.5	5.7*	30.4
Prince Edward Island	22.3**	42.3	9.2**	46.5
Nova Scotia	14.5*	21.5	5.0**	37.1
New Brunswick	11.7*	24.8	3.7**	38.7
Quebec	19.9	10.2	12.0	15.2
Ontario	11.2	13.3	7.8	13.6
Manitoba	15.7*	20.6	13.9*	18.2
Saskatchewan	9.9*	17.6	4.5*	27.7
Alberta	13.8*	20.9	11.1*	21.3
British Columbia	16.7*	21.6	8.9*	20.2
All provinces	*14.7*	*6.5*	*9.2*	*7.2*

TABLE A.5

Highest Educational Attainment of Parents of High School Dropouts (Percent)

	Highest educational attainment of parents							
	Less than high school		High school		Post-secondary certificate/diploma		University degree	
Region	*Estimate*	*CV*	*Estimate*	*CV*	*Estimate*	*CV*	*Estimate*	*CV*
Atlantic	36.2	10.0	38.4	9.2	17.0*	18.0	8.4*	27.3
Quebec	29.9	10.0	44.2	6.8	19.6	13.0	6.3*	21.4
Ontario	24.9	13.0	45.0	7.4	17.5	13.3	12.6*	20.3
Prairies	26.4	11.9	47.7	6.3	12.7	15.9	13.2*	17.4
British Columbia	18.6*	19.6	48.1	11.3	15.0*	21.7	18.3*	21.8
All regions	*26.9*	*5.9*	*45.2*	*3.6*	*16.9*	*7.2*	*11.0*	*9.7*

TABLE A.6

Self-assessment of High School Dropouts' Problem-solving Skills (Percent)

	Skill level					
	Poor / fair		Good		Very good / excellent	
Region	*Estimate*	*CV*	*Estimate*	*CV*	*Estimate*	*CV*
Atlantic	21.4	10.5	52.6	6.2	26.0	11.1
Quebec	20.6	10.5	45.8	6.2	33.7	6.9
Ontario	14.8	13.8	52.9	5.5	32.3	8.7
Prairies	22.8*	16.7	44.2	7.1	33.0	8.9
British Columbia	13.7*	21.4	51.6	8.6	34.6	13.0
All regions	*18.6*	*6.9*	*48.6*	*3.1*	*32.8*	*4.2*

Notes

1 Based on data from the 1996 Census of Population and the Labour Force Survey, 1997 to 1999.

2 For a detailed account of the LFS methodology, see Gambino, J.G., Singh, M.P., Dufour, J., Kennedy, B. and Lindeyer, J. (1998). *Methodology of the Canadian Labour Force Survey*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 71-526.

3 For more detail on the bootstrap method of variance estimation, see Rao, J.N.K., Wu, C.F.J. and Yue, K. (1992). Some Recent Work on Resampling Methods for Complex Surveys. *Survey Methodology*, 18, 209-217.

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